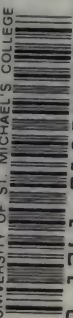


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KEBLE'S
LECTURES ON POETRY

1832-1841

TRANSLATED BY
EDWARD KERSHAW FRANCIS

IN TWO VOLUMES

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De Poeticæ Vi Medica.

PRÆLECTIONES ACADEMICÆ

OXONII HABITÆ,

ANNIS

MDCCCXXXII MDCCCXLI,

A JOANNE KEBLE, A.M.

POETICÆ PUBLICO PRÆLECTORE,
COLLEGII ORIELENsis NUPER SOCIO.

Ὁ δὲ Θεὸς διὰ πάντων τούτων ἔλκει τὴν ψυχὴν ὅποι ἂν βούληται τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀνακρεμαννὺς ἐξ ἀλλήλων τὴν δύναμιν.

Plato in Ione, c. 7.

TOM. II.

OXONII :

J. H. PARKER.

M.DCCC.XLIV.

[The numbers in the margin refer to the pages of the original.]

The Choephoraë : the tragic horror of the story tempered by four methods : first, by maintaining throughout the impression of a solemn sacrifice : secondly, by the support of Apollo and the Sacred Oracle : thirdly, by an undefined suggestion of the near presence of Agamemnon himself : lastly, by the human feeling exhibited by Orestes, and, in an even higher degree, by Electra.

You have been good enough, gentlemen—though I fear it is out of your indulgent kindness rather than out of strict regard for my deserts—to confer this distinguished office upon me for another five years :¹ and I tender you my warmest thanks, fully conscious as I am, that as this act has increased your kindness, so it has made more difficult the hard task which I have undertaken. For it is a bolder act on your part to show indulgence to one who does not merit it after you have tested his powers, than to form too high an estimate of him when still untried. I, indeed, could wish that my powers, or, at all events, my leisure were greater, so that I might more faithfully take up the remaining links of this chain of discourse upon the subject of Poetry. But so far as my main views are concerned I have nothing to withdraw or modify : in fact, the proofs in support of them seem to become only clearer and more cogent as time passes.

To pass, however, to the immediate subject of my present lecture—the *Choephoraë* of Aeschylus. This play forms, as you know, a sequel to the *Agamemnon*, but there 386 is this marked distinction between the two plays : in the *Agamemnon* an uncertain and vague apprehension

¹ The Professorship of Poetry is held for five years ; Mr. Keble's tenure of it ceased after Lecture XX, but he was re-elected for a second period.

predominates, and an undefined sense of approaching evil : while in the *Choephorae* our minds feel reassured and at rest from the first, as though we were on the point of reaching the goal of righteous vengeance : and this for the simple reason that Divine Power here suggests and declares itself far more openly than in the former drama. In brief, to the *Agamemnon* may be fitly assigned as a motto these closing lines of one of its own choral songs :

But now in gloom it wails
Sore vexed, with little hope
At any time hereafter fitting end
To find, unravelling,
My soul within me burning with hot thoughts.¹

But the *Choephorae* may be just as fairly summed in its two magnificent lines :

Long tarries destiny,
But comes to those who pray.²

Thus a tone of calm unruffled serenity dominates the whole play. Not once is there the least misgiving as to a Divine Providence, or as to retribution following upon crime : the only excitement is to watch the exact method and stages by which the inevitable vengeance will carry out its appointed task.

To-day, therefore, I shall set forth in detail, to the best of my power, the salient points of this great work of art : and these, I think, may all be embraced under four headings. First, the form and feature of the whole Tragedy are conceived after the manner of a religious function. Secondly, all the characters are governed throughout by the utterance of the Sacred Oracle, namely that of Apollo of Delphi, who never for a moment fails to protect Orestes with his divine
387 presence. Thirdly, Orestes and Electra appeal to the shade of Agamemnon, not once or twice merely but whenever

¹ *Agam.* 1030 (Plumptre).

² *Choeph.* 462 (Plumptre).

they have to give effect to their solemn vows, and they appeal to him, I repeat, in such words as show that to them he was silently present, hearing and supporting them. Lastly, if we carefully scrutinize the leading characters of the play, we shall find, beyond all question, the weightiest indications of pious reverence: throughout, the more violent impulses of their dispositions are tempered, the excesses of their hope, grief, and resentment are restrained, and that because their minds are filled with trust in a Divine Power. I shall now proceed to illustrate this four-fold analysis by the clearest examples I can select.

In the first place, then, I said that the tenor of this tragedy was in high degree comparable to that of a solemn liturgy, conducted with due ceremonial: and this, I suppose, cannot fail to strike any one who with the least attention has pictured to himself the first entrance of Orestes on the stage:

O Hermes of the darkness 'neath the earth,
Who hast the charge of all thy Father's sway,
To me who pray deliverer, helper, be:
For I to this land come, from exile come,
And on the raised mound of this monument
I bid my father hear and list.¹

Observe that at the very opening of the play two more than human personages are invoked to bear their due part—one, Agamemnon himself who has long been dead, the other Hermes, the messenger of the gods of the lower world—both of whom, in my judgement, Aeschylus intended to be considered as silently present on the stage throughout the whole course of the play. It is, indeed, a silent presence, felt but not visible to mortal eyes; yet not without its real effect, nor in any way doubtful to sympathetic observers. This, however, deserves fuller treatment on its own account: I now merely note it, as showing that

¹ *Choeph.* 1 (Plumptre).

388 Aeschylus deliberately, and at the very outset of his play, took care to invoke those sacred names, thus emphasizing that, as if at his own Eleusis (for he was born in that village), a sort of mystic and religious function was being performed.

Moreover, the very order and sound of the diction itself seems to suggest a solemn, set form of liturgy: especially, among other reasons, from the fact that one and the same thought is varied and reiterated in differing phrase: *Deliverer, helper* be: *I come, from exile come*: I bid my father *hear and list*. Aristophanes indeed, as was the manner of that master of ridicule, makes jest of this: but it must be remembered that such repetition is quite natural to those who employ a set form of words in prayer. For, in some measure; such set forms are like a formal proclamation recited in public: which, either to suit the dignity of the subject, or to overcome the inattentiveness of the hearers, frequently reiterates and insists upon the same idea.

Then how impressive, how solemn, is the effect of making the whole course of the play take place near the grave of Agamemnon! which, as far as I can conjecture, stood before the gateway of Clytemnestra's palace. For the lines of the Chorus, who follow Orestes with their prayers after he has, in the guise and dress of a traveller, just entered Aegisthus' palace, plainly show that the scene does not change, and that the actors do not move about from place to place, as in other plays and indeed in the very next play of the poet, the *Eumenides*. When he has knocked at the gate and entered the house by invitation of the queen, the Chorus of Maidens bursts forth at once with words of good augury:

O earth revered! thou height revered, too,
Of the mound piled o'er the body
Of our navy's kingly captain,
Oh, hear us now: oh, come and help us:

For 'tis time for subtle Suasion
To go with them to the conflict.¹

Whence it is quite obvious that they are speaking in sight 389
of the tomb which they venerate with such loving regard.
In the beginning of the poem they show that it has the
sacredness of an altar for them ; for when Electra appeals to
them for counsel this is how they promise their support :

Thy father's tomb as altar honouring,
I, as thou bidd'st, will speak my heart-thoughts out !²

It would be a mistake to suppose that the tomb is thus
placed merely by chance, or for the sake of scenic effect.
In the first place, the very fact that the whole story, such
as it is, is completed in one and the same place, greatly
tends, as any one may see, to simplicity and to a dignified,
severe style of composition : indeed, the observance of this
rule is the main reason why Greek Tragedy is for the most
part more impressive and severe than our own. But the more
simple and severe such a rule is, the better suited was it
for a writer who was imitating the form of a great religious
service. I may also incidentally remark that the same play
retained another mark of primitive simplicity which the
writer had neglected in the *Agamemnon* ; namely, the
observance of the 'unity of time' : which requires that
neither shall the play as represented on the stage be too
long, nor shall it compress into a very few hours events
which in reality extended over many years. For instance,
in the *Agamemnon*, the return of the Argives follows imme-
diately upon the fall of Troy, though, as all the spectators
knew, it was a process involving many months. Again,
when Aeschylus composed the *Eumenides*, he did not
scruple to represent in close proximity localities so far
removed in distance and time as the Delphic rock and the
Areopagus. There is absolutely nothing of this kind in the

¹ *Choeph.* 720 (Plumptre).

² *Choeph.* 104 (Plumptre).

Choephoraë: everything is strictly and exactly ordered after 390 the rules laid down by the most stringent critics. And this, as I have said, is eminently appropriate to a religious ceremonial.

There is another point which I should like you to consider, for it is indeed the chief cause why we have this express mention of Agamemnon's tomb: it is that in this more than in any other way the crime of matricide, which would otherwise be unspeakably monstrous and horrible, is palliated and made to appear less revolting. For whenever Orestes and Electra turn their eyes thither they become as it were ocular witnesses of the savage murder committed by Clytemnestra, and they remind themselves that they have sworn to avenge their father: then their slumbering resentment awakens: the spirit of a righteous and holy warfare is kept alive in their hearts. Whenever they invoke solemn curses upon their enemies, this is not the language of taunting resentment or of merciless savagery: rather, we would say, it has the character of prophecy, as it might be the voice of divinity itself, with awful formula dooming to destruction wicked and impious mortals. In short, we may give practically the same explanation of these tragic imprecations as is usually given of those maledictions sometimes found in the writings of the Hebrew Psalmist: namely, that in great part they indicate, not what men desire, but what they forebode and feel will shortly come to pass. For instance:

O Zeus! O Zeus! who sendest from below
 A woe of tardy doom
 Upon the bold and subtle hands of men. . . .
 May it be mine to chant o'er funeral pyre
 Cry well accordant with the pine-fed blaze,
 When first the man is slain,
 And his wife perisheth! ¹

¹ *Choeph.* 379 (381) (Plumptre).

These lines, whether they are assigned to Electra or to the Chorus (for scholars are not unanimous on this point), seem to me, unquestionably, to have the quality, not of a prayer merely, but of an oracular utterance. What more 391 likely than that a mind eager to follow the Divine guidance and assured, beyond doubt, of its behests, should adopt in preference to all others that form of speech which pre-eminently suggests and avows its own whole-hearted agreement with the Higher Powers? And I think the poet plainly shows this, for he immediately makes the same speaker reason thus:

Why should I hide what flutters round my heart?

As much as to say, that she is not giving way to anger when she so openly invokes evils upon the adulterers, but that she is obeying the bidding of some celestial monitor: and that under its influence she is like a ship driven rapidly forward by a strong breeze:

On my heart's prow a blast blows mightily,
Keen wrath and loathing fierce.¹

This most serious of poets thus gives us due warning that where the bitterest wrath and resentment are expressed, at the same moment appeal is made to a Divine avenging power: so that none may conclude that it is simply a question of the private rights of Orestes and Electra, but all should realize that something of universal and sacred interest is involved, which has the closest connexion with the universal laws of right and wrong.

There is a sacred impressiveness, too, in the fact that, even at the moment when the criminals are put to death, the idea of the royal tomb as a kind of altar is maintained. For while Aeschylus stays short of offering Clytemnestra as a sacrifice on the tomb itself (for that would have been

¹ *Choeph.* 387 (Plumptre).

too monstrous and repulsive for public representation), yet their just lifeless bodies are brought forth and exposed
 392 like those of sacrificed victims : and not without a solemn and set prayer being offered by Orestes, for his words sound like a prayer :

See ye this country's tyrant rulers twain,
 My father's murderers, wasters of his house. . . .
 And ye who hear these ills, behold ye now
 Their foul device, as bonds for my poor father. . . .
 Show ye the snare that wrapt him o'er, that He
 May see, our Father,—not of mine I speak,
 But the great Sun that looks on all we do,—
 My mother's deeds, defiled and impure,
 That He may be a witness in my cause,
 That I did justly bring this doom to pass
 Upon my mother.¹

Any one can see that the whole scene was intentionally constructed in this key in order that the unhappy son may appear to be performing the task of a priest rather than that of an executioner : and so be entitled to all indulgence and excuse, as one offering sacrifice pursuant to the behests of Supreme Power. Thus Aeschylus, by reason of this one artistic effect, gained by representing the action of the play as taking place at the tomb of Agamemnon, has marvelously proved his superiority to Sophocles and Euripides, both of whom subsequently dealt with the same story.

Let me next enumerate a few minor details, which, however trifling they may seem in themselves, yet are not without significance in a play of religious and sacred import. We find Orestes, for example, after the manner of the old heroes, first of all severing a lock of his hair, cherished with pious care, as an offering to Inachus the God of his country's stream :

One tress,
 Thank-offering for the gifts that fed my youth,
 To Inachus I consecrate.²

¹ *Choeph.* 973 (Plumptre).

² *Choeph.* 6 (Plumptre).

In this short extract from Orestes' beautiful prayer Aeschylus shows that he himself was a zealous student of Homer, and that Orestes, while intent on the great task he had undertaken, was not entirely forgetful of his childish years and the sweet charm of familiar regions.

A little later again, a pause occurs before the prayers are 393 offered at the tomb, but the interruption itself arose from religious scruples. First the chorus of captive women, then Electra herself, approach the tomb bringing the sacrificial offerings sent by the queen : but the greater part of the speeches of each of them turns on the sole question as to whether it is right to offer to the shades of the slain king gifts sent by her who wrought his murder : these doubts solved and the invocations completed, the celebrated 'recognition' follows, where Electra identifies Orestes by aid of his votive lock of hair laid on the tomb.

And in connexion with this episode there is another and no uncertain sign of a scrupulous piety, which deserves careful notice, namely, that amidst her affectionate greetings and sudden joy at her brother's unhopcd-for return, the loving sister seems to check herself and breaks off abruptly into a prayer to the Gods :

May Might and Right,
And sovran Zeus as third, my helpers be !¹

While her brother, who is of still sterner mould, does not respond to her tears and endearments by as much as one affectionate word, but at once begins with formal prayer, as if overcome and almost horrified at the tremendous burden of the duty divinely imposed upon him :

Zeus ! Zeus ! be Thou a witness of our troubles,
See the lorn brood that calls an eagle sire,
Eagle that perished in the coils and folds
Of a fell viper. Now on them bereaved

¹ *Choeph.* 240 (244) (Plumptre).

Presses gaunt famine. Not as yet full-grown
Are they to bring their father's booty home.¹

We have here an instance of a characteristic which we have already noticed in Aeschylus,—that he draws comparisons from the life of animals, and incidentally introduces little sketches of their ways and habits. But to proceed with Orestes' address :

394 Thus it is thine to see in me and her,
(I mean Electra) children fatherless,
Both suffering the same exile from our home.
And should'st Thou havoc make of brood of sire
Who at Thine altar greatly honoured Thee,
Whence wilt Thou get a festive offering
From hand as free ? Nor, should'st Thou bring to
naught
The eagle's nestlings, would'st Thou have at hand
A messenger to bear Thy will to man
In signs persuasive ; nor when withered up
This royal stock shall be, will it again
Wait on Thine altars at high festivals.²

He appeals to Jove with just those reasonings which we know were most usual among the ancients in such situations. Following on this, the three—Orestes, Electra, and the Chorus—chant in turn a threefold appeal to Avenging Deity; or lament for Agamemnon—whichever we choose to call it : and certainly the verses, both in rhythm and structure, most aptly suggest the formal liturgy common to suppliants.

But what more need I say ? nearly half the whole play is taken up with performance of these solemn ceremonials : and unless Aeschylus devised them with strict religious meaning, his labour had been better spent in contriving an ingenious dramatic situation with Sophocles, or a clever variety of arguments with Euripides.

And besides, the choruses in this play are throughout

¹ *Choeph.* 244 (246) (Plumptre).

² *Choeph.* 252 (Plumptre).

of such a tone, as constantly to recall men's minds and feelings to the thought of a present Deity and of the retribution about to issue from His innermost sanctuary : so that it would scarcely be wrong to treat these choral songs also as if partaking of the nature of a solemn ceremonial. And, even more than this, the Chorus,¹ immediately following the departure of Orestes on his fatal design, is much taken up with reprobation of wicked women and the evil wrought by them : such as Althaea, who killed her own son in a fit of rage : and Scylla the Megarian who, moved by mad passion, destroyed her own father : and above all, the most unqualified detestation is reserved for those Lemnian women who murdered their husbands. All 395 this, I apprehend, was not only intended to menace Clytemnestra with dark omens, but, as it were, to surrender her to the sure and righteous vengeance of the Higher Powers, and especially of those powers whose chief care it is to maintain the rights and interests of mortal men—Erinnys, I mean, Mercury, and Jove Himself, who are each invoked by name in this solemn chorus.

Of similar import is the circumstance that when, towards the commencement of the Chorus, reference is made to the ills besetting men's lives, the Pythagorean Aeschylus has recorded his belief—in this agreeing with the Peripatetic philosopher, as quoted by Cicero²—that nowhere and at no time are we menaced so seriously as we are by our own selves whenever, be we men or women, we are urged by headlong passion. We can see the end of evils which storms of the elements or rage of wild beasts bring down upon humanity : but those which issue from men against their kind these can neither be numbered nor kept within bounds :

Many dread forms of evils terrible
Earth bears, and Ocean's bays

¹ *Choeph.* 585.

² *De Officiis*, ii. 5. 16.

With monsters wild and fierce
 O'erflow, and through mid-air the meteor lights
 Sweep by ; and wingèd birds
 And creeping things can tell the vehement rage
 Of whirling storms of winds.
 But who man's temper overbold may tell,
 Or daring passionate loves
 Of women bold in heart,
 Passions close bound with men's calamities ? ¹

Some may perhaps detect here no faint suggestion of the inspired truth found in the New Testament : ' For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind : But the tongue can no man tame ; it is an unruly evil, full of
 396 deadly poison.' ² I quote these verses all the more readily inasmuch as they are taken from that part of the sacred writings which seems to me, beyond all the rest, to be most imbued with the qualities we find in those of Aeschylus himself : whether it be due to a certain archaic dignity of thought, or because the inspired writer, like Aeschylus, constantly adds thought to thought in a sequence which is simple rather than ingenious and artistic.

But, to pursue our consideration of the choruses in this play : may not the poet's purpose, in this bitter denunciation of the wickedness of men, have been to turn our minds more effectively towards the unbounded and untiring goodness of the Gods ? Can we not suppose that the Chorus, standing forth as representing, in some sort, this whole race of wretched mortals, took upon itself to confess before the Gods the sins, misdeeds, and errors which are common to all humanity ? Such confession springs from the promptings of Nature herself, and has been, throughout all ages, not the least part of religion and the service of the Gods. But I have said enough of this lyric.

Again, when Orestes has entered the palace, the Chorus

¹ *Choeph.* 585 (Plumpton).

² *Jas.* iii. 7-8.

follow his movements with chants of happy omen. In all of these the chief note is a prayer, in set form, to Jove and Mercury and the household Gods to lend their aid : then, when his task has thus won the blessing of heaven, they openly and plainly urge him to his mother's murder ; and add incentives, lest his hand should pause in horror :

But thou, take courage when the time is come
 For action, and cry out,
 Shouting thy father's name,
 When she shall cry aloud the name of ' son ',
 And work thou out a woe that none will blame.¹

Assuredly this exhibits artistic skill in a high degree : for the Chorus, standing as interpreter of the Divine Will, in the midst, too, of prayers and religious ceremonial, actually counsels and rehearses in anticipation what would else appear as the most horrible detail of a horrible deed.

Finally, when the fatal deed is fully accomplished, the 397 Chorus is, in like spirit, prepared with its Song of Triumph : wishing to testify that the sacrificial act is viewed as just by the immortal Gods :

Late came due vengeance on the sons of Priam,
 Just forfeit of sore woe ;—
 Late came there too to Agamemnon's house,
 Twin lions, twofold Death.
 The exile who obeyed the Pythian hest
 Hath gained his full desire,
 Sped on his way by counsel from the Gods.
 Shout ye, loud shout for the escape from ills
 Our master's house has seen. . . .
 And so on one who loves the war of guile
 Revenge came subtle-souled :
 And in the strife of hands the child of Zeus
 In very deed gave help,
 (We mortals call her Vengeance, hitting well
 The meetest name for her,)
 Breathing destroying wrath against her foes.

¹ *Choeph.* 825 (827) (Plumptre).

She, she it is whom Loxias summons now,
 Who dwelleth in Parnassia's cavern vast,
 Calling on her who still
 Is guileful without guile.¹

So 'foams, thunders, glows'² our poet, hardly, indeed, leaving breathing space for a cool contemplation of the deed itself: nor can we easily bring ourselves to stamp as parricide an act wrought with the assent, and even with the assistance, of the Higher Powers.

Hence, whether we look at the Choric Odes, or the scheme of place and scene, or the alternate prayers of Electra and Orestes at their father's tomb, or the severe simplicity of the whole poem, with none of the changes and chances of Fortune to vary the interest, no ambitious ornaments of style to distract the attention—we shall not, in my judgement, greatly err when we conclude that this play has closest affinity with religion and with sacred rites.

I pass to the part played by the oracle of Phoebus, a part most weighty and remarkable, both in this play and
 398 also in the *Eumenides*; and that you may better appreciate its real significance, I will ask you to remember how important the fact is when the religious aspirations of many separate states have one common centre, and then flow out from it, and flow as from one common spring, to every part of the whole nation. It is in this way, that those who were once scattered and dispersed, whose minds turned this way and that in their search for truth, come all alike to recognize one external manifestation of religion. We are, moreover, so constituted by our very nature that the power of locality is almost incredibly strong not only to remind us of things once witnessed, but also to make us believe in things remote, and such as are situate far beyond our vision. Hence the mere name of the Delphic shrine had a great, nay a marvellous, effect: at the mere mention of it, even

¹ *Choeph.* 935 (Plumptre).

² *Hor. Odes*, iv. 2. 7 (Conington).

those who were never likely to see the place itself were far more readily influenced in mind towards religion and a sacred, holy reverence. Each man at once would picture to himself the spots which he had never seen, and this would make it more easy for him to present to and impress upon his mind the laws and utterances of the God. But should any have ever seen Delphi, and gazed with their own eyes upon those distant and venerated haunts, the peaks of Parnassus, the fountain of Castalia, the rocks, the caves, the laurel-clad glades: then, I should say confidently, not only would the memory of these things ever abide in their minds, but it would also throughout life colour in some sort their affection and thoughts so far as these are concerned with holy and sacred things.

There is another consideration too, which, important as it is, I do not dwell upon: I mean that, at that particular time in Greek history, the minds of men who had political ambition, or had their country's interests at heart, turned instinctively to the thought of this temple and oracular shrine as being a common possession of all Greece. The number of such men was largely increased in the time of Aeschylus himself by the Persian invasion, when the Asiatic pillagers were miraculously confounded at the threshold of the temple. In short, true Greeks felt no ordinary or simple pleasure whenever this temple or its adjacent regions were referred to on the stage: such would have been their feeling, on hearing the prologue of the *Eumenides*:

The Nymphs adore I too where stands the rock
Korykian, hollow, loved of birds, and haunt
Of Gods.¹

Or the morning hymn in the *Ion* of Euripides:

Now the resplendent chariot of the Sun
Shines o'er the Earth: from its ethereal fires,
Beneath the veil of sacred night, the stars

¹ *Eum.* 22 (Plumptre).

Conceal themselves. Parnassus' cloven ridge,
 Too steep for human footsteps to ascend,
 Receives the lustre of its orient beams,
 And through the world reflects them : while the smoke
 Of fragrant myrrh ascends Apollo's roof ;
 The Delphic priestess on the holy tripod
 Now takes her seat, and to the listening sons
 Of Greece those truths in mystic notes unfolds,
 With which the Gods inspire her labouring breast.
 But, O ye Delphic ministers of Phoebus,
 Now to Castalia's silver fount repair,
 And when ye have performed the due ablutions,
 Enter the temple.¹

Lines such as these summoned before the imagination the loveliest windings of valleys and all the seductive dread of the dense and pathless grove : but, above all, stirred the remembrance of the common brotherhood and alliance of all Greeks, of their national altar, of their common religion.

So that, when Aeschylus (I return to the subject whence I have strayed a little) represents the Pythian Apollo as counselling and encouraging Orestes, it is much as if he had summoned to champion his cause all the religious
 400 feelings of all Greece ; and he has done this far more naturally and artistically than if, like Euripides, he had from time to time sprung a *Deus ex machina* upon the stage : a device which, to me, appears to offend even more gravely against good taste and due reverence to the Gods than against the truth of human life. For how absurd it is to think that a deed otherwise of utmost atrocity can be made venial on the mere utterance of a voice from the skies ! an expedient which Euripides, whom I just referred to, employs both elsewhere and at the end of his *Electra*.² How much more justly conceived is the scheme of Aeschylus, who insists from the outset that the whole design depends upon the decree of the sacred oracle : and however things fall out, that Orestes need by no means

¹ Eurip. *Ion*, 82 (Wodhull).

reproach himself since he had but obeyed the command of so mighty a Power :

Nay, nay, I tell you, Loxias' oracle,
In strength excelling, will not fail us now,
That bade me on this enterprise to start,
And with clear voice spake often, warning me
Of chilling pain-throes at the fevered heart,
Unless my father's murderers I should chase.

Must I not trust such oracles as these ?¹

To this Aeschylus has added those terrific maledictions which Apollo held over his head should he fail to avenge his father :

For the dark weapon of the Gods below,
Winged by our kindred that lie low in death
And beg for vengeance, yea, and madness too,
And vague, dim fears at night disturb and haunt me,
Seeing full clearly, though I move my brow
In the thick darkness . . . and that then my frame,
Thus tortured, should be driven from the city
With brass-knobbed scourge : and that for such as I
It was not given to share the wine-cup's taste,
Nor votive stream in pure libation poured ;
And that my father's wrath invisible
Would drive me from all altars, and that none
Should take me in or lodge with me ; at last,
That, loathed of all and friendless, I should die,
A wretched mummy, all my strength consumed.²

This is extremely like the formula of excommunication which is said to obtain even now both at Rome and elsewhere, when some contumacious person is visited with 401 curses and execrations. And on this account I have deemed it worthy of notice here, for the similarity shows how deep was its religious significance.

Again, when Orestes begins to explain his plan more distinctly, namely, that he means to proceed by guile,

¹ *Choeph.* 267 (269) (Plumptre).

² *Choeph.* 284 (Plumptre).

not open violence, observe how wisely, at the outset of this speech too, Apollo's orders are pleaded in excuse :

That they who slew a noble soul by guile,
By guile may die and in the self-same snare
Be caught, as Loxias gave his oracle,
The King Apollo, seer that never lied.¹

Thus is the deed—perhaps almost too horrible—palliated.

And, finally, at the very crisis of the crime, what else is it that sustains his halting purpose than Apollo's behest spoken this time by Pylades, who hitherto had not uttered a word ?

What shall I do, my Pylades ? shall I
Through this respect forbear to slay my mother ?²

So questions Orestes, much moved, as he might well be, by his mother's entreaties, her bared bosom, and the thoughts of his childhood. But Pylades replies : ' Spare not : by no means leave the sacrifice unfinished.'

Where, then, are Loxias' other oracles,
The Pythian counsels, and the fast-sworn vows ?
Have all men hostile rather than the Gods.

We may perhaps speculate, how it is that Pylades should break silence in this one place, though, save here, he does not utter a single word : similarly in Sophocles and Euripides he does not even speak once. I infer, therefore, that this was due to the traditional treatment of the story of Orestes : for it is hardly likely that the later poets here
402 merely followed Aeschylus, especially as Euripides has more than once silently criticized Aeschylus for details of this kind ; still less can we suppose that three poets, differing among themselves so markedly, should one and all by accident have fallen upon this same device, far removed as it was from the common practice of the drama. Why, therefore, may we not conclude that Aeschylus, with his

¹ *Choeph.* 554 (Plumptre).

² *Choeph.* 899 (Plumptre).

usual grave impressiveness, deliberately departed both from ancient tradition and other writers in this solitary speech of Pylades ; wishing to mark him out clearly to us as being a sort of ambassador, the interpreter and messenger of the Oracle and thus of Apollo himself ? Therefore, though speechless, by his mere presence and countenance he warns Orestes what he has to do : but when the affair becomes critical—begins, as the Greeks say, ‘ to stand upon the razor’s edge ’—when the sword is drawn to slay his mother, then as his temper unworthily leans to pity, and recollection of the divine command all at once grows dim : at length, as from some oracle, the voice of his comrade, which till then had been silent, sounds forth and insists that ‘ all must be placed second to the Gods ’. Once he hears this, Orestes braces himself to the fatal act : Pylades, his part played, becomes speechless as before. In this way the revolting murder is extenuated, the oracle being seasonably repeated, and yet the modesty and reverence due to supreme power are sustained, for the God himself is not needlessly, repellently, and without dignity brought upon the stage.

But so much for the part assigned to Pylades. I merely mention in passing, since it is patent and clear to all, that when Orestes leaves the stage he appeals to Apollo in express terms :

And I
As chiefest spell that made me dare this deed
Count Loxias, Pythian prophet, warning me
That doing this I should be free from blame,
But slighting . . . I pass o’er the penalty,
For none, aim as he will, such woes will hit.¹

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It is a touch highly characteristic of Aeschylus, and one, I think, pre-eminently bound up with piety and holiness, that he represents Orestes, greatly terrified, and, as it were,

¹ *Choeph.* 1029 (Plumptre).

closing his eyes, at the thought of the divine displeasure and punishment. But to proceed with Orestes :

And now ye see me, in what guise equipped,
 [*Putting on the suppliant's wreaths of wool, and
 taking an olive branch in his hand.*

With this my bough and chaplet I will gain
 Earth's central shrine, the home where Loxias dwells,
 And the bright fire that is as deathless known,
 Seeking to 'scape this guilt of kindred blood ;
 And on no other hearth, so Loxias bade,
 May I seek shelter.¹

In fine, by his wreath, habit of dress, and carriage he declares himself a suppliant of Delphi : and claims the audience as witnesses with their own eyes, that not without sanction and support of Apollo had he wrought what he did. And this, coming as it does at the very end of the play, sends the spectators away with far deeper feelings than if, like the Orestes of Sophocles, he had forthwith indulged in empty triumph. For after this, indeed, neither in imagination nor in the recollection of what they had seen, could they sever and disjoin the thought of Orestes the agent from that of Apollo his champion. And thus he attains what is a real triumph of art : though mother is slain by son and daughter, we do not feel the act repulsive.

It remains for us to consider the silent part which the dead Agamemnon plays (if I may use the word), the significance of which is much the same as that of the oracle of Apollo of which I have just spoken. For we are somehow made to feel that the dead king is really present at every part of the poem, though purposely veiled from sight : an effect which, had it been in the hands of Euripides, one can hardly doubt would have been produced by his ghost standing in full gaze before the audience, and in a dull and insipid speech saying much which Aeschylus more effectively

¹ *Choeph.* 1034 (Plumptre).

assigns to those who are making their offering and to the solemn Chorus.

‘But’, it may be objected, ‘our own Shakespeare, 404 who certainly was never dull and insipid, did not hesitate in several instances to bring ghosts upon the stage clothed in bodily form, and, more than that, to effect by their agency much which was of highest importance in developing the action.’ That is true, yet any one who desires to shelter himself under the authority of that great man, will have to be very sparing and to deal very reverently with the spirits of the dead. Four times only, if I remember aright, in the long list of his tragedies did Shakespeare permit himself to call up such spirits. They are all well known to you, since each appears in one of his chief plays. First there is that king who unable to sleep is terror-stricken at seeing in the night the ghosts of those who had been his own innocent victims : who appearing one after another in due order menace him with dreadful omens and invoke all kinds of good fortune on his opponent.¹ But, obviously it is here simply a question of a dream sent from heaven, such as, in that age, according to trustworthy testimony, was wont to visit troubled minds. Certainly the circumstance that these visions appear in full face of the audience and exhibit themselves to the test of ear and eye seems somewhat crude and inartistic ; yet it may be that this was the only way by which the divine significance of the dream could be recognized.

With these is to be classed the ghost which appeared to Macbeth² when sitting at supper, taking the form of a man who had been by his agency most cruelly murdered ; this was absolutely silent and visible to none but himself : whence it is amply clear that it was a simple figment of a mind seething with the bitter consciousness of crime, and therefore not a being to be presented to the eyes of the spectators

¹ *Rich. III.*, III. iii.

² *Macbeth*, III. iv.

or named among the characters of the tragedy. Thirdly, the form of the dead Caesar¹ appeared to Brutus when he
 405 was on the point of death ; but for what purpose ? only to speak three words and then vanish into air : and even in this detail the poet, we may be sure, was merely following received traditions. For he does not go beyond the actual words recorded in Plutarch ; the only change he makes being that Shakespeare calls it Caesar's ghost, while Plutarch gives it no name. Had Shakespeare been the least more ambitious of excellence in dealing with such a theme, surely here was an opportunity which allowed him ample range. But he was assuredly taught, taught by his instinctive reverence, that strictest reserve was due in all that borders on religion.

In my judgement, in fact, so far as these three instances are concerned, Shakespeare by no means overpassed the reserve characteristic of Aeschylus in his presentment of departed spirits. To begin with, in these rare cases which I have quoted, he may either plead that he was following some early tradition, which asserted that the event really happened : or that the tenor of events was calculated to arouse the Furies of a guilty conscience, or to summon up dreams likely to forecast some divine retribution. And then, after all, what a small part of each play turns upon such apparitions ! The wraith that appears to Macbeth, the image of the slain Banquo, is seen by himself alone and once only, and then departs without uttering a single syllable. The others speak no more than just suffices to hint that they are bringing a message from heaven.

Such are the grounds which led me to declare that Shakespeare, when dealing with this theme, proceeds with extreme caution and almost reluctantly : there can be no question of the fact : nor shall we find anything tending to a contrary view in the only play which remains to be considered

¹ *Julius Caesar*, iv. iii.

—I mean *Hamlet*—the noblest and greatest of all his tragedies : and I refer to this play all the more readily inasmuch as many critics have noticed that its general scheme presents many points of similarity with the *Choephoraë*. Both present to us a royal house and family stained by murder of a king and the incestuous passion of his queen : in each the son of the victim appears as his avenger, urged to inflict retribution upon his mother by express command of heaven. In short, the outline of the 406 plot is the same in both, but in the treatment there are striking differences, which make all the more striking their agreement in this one respect, I mean that they feel that Poetry ought to show great self-restraint and a religious tenderness in all treatment of departed spirits. Nor does it militate against this agreement that while Orestes is braced to his deed of vengeance by receiving a command from the oracle of Apollo, Hamlet is braced by an appearance of his father's spirit at night. Each writer followed, I imagine, received traditions : though Aeschylus was in this respect somewhat the more fortunate of the two, since he was thus able to maintain more fully the austere dignity of the Gods who guard the dead, as the spirit of Agamemnon is completely withdrawn from sight, while our own poet was compelled to summon the ghost of the dead king from the tomb, exposing him openly to public gaze, and causing him to speak his mind at length. I do not in the least intend to suggest that our prince of poets is to be blamed for this : rather it is his distinguished glory to have associated not only discreetly but piously that reverence which the departed should inspire with this terrible apparition. Nor should fault be found, in my judgement, because the ghost not only appeared to Hamlet, but to the three soldiers as well. For thus the doubt was met, which was sure to arrest the keen-minded Hamlet, that his vision was an illusion and merely a figment of his own brain. Even after

so many notable evidences, he still hesitates, doubting whether the apparition brings with it 'airs from heaven or blasts from hell', whether it is 'a spirit of health or goblin damned'. Moreover, observe how deliberately, in Shakespeare's judgement, indeed, with what reluctance, the shades of the departed reveal themselves to the eyes of mortal men. On the first occasion, that impressive apparition
 407 (for indeed it should be called impressive rather than dreadful or monstrous) is only seen by two soldiers while on guard at the entrance of the royal castle: on the third night there is associated with them only the intimate friend and companion of Hamlet himself. All these the apparition passes by in dead silence: once, however, it seemed only prevented from speaking by the entrance of the dawn. And, more than this, even on meeting Hamlet himself the ghost will only speak when all witnesses have withdrawn, and then only on such things as have reference either to the duty of sacred revenge or to the courage and right spirit of a true son; themes not unworthy, in sooth, of a father's care after death. Again, the dead king's spirit more than once, during the progress of the drama, makes itself felt by the audience: as, for instance, when he makes evident by voice dully heard from below ground that he is himself witness of the oaths sworn by his son's companions:¹ the purport being of vital importance to the successful issue of the work of revenge; or again when in presence of his wife he urges and rallies his son² whose 'blunted purpose' lets go by the important acting of his dread command: all this, I say, has much the same meaning as, and may be compared with, the single exhortation of Pylades to the hesitating Orestes. And in this latter scene his feeling, though deeply angered, shows itself touched by the appearance of the wretched queen and his memory of the past: so much so, that, just as he had enjoined his son to spare

¹ *Hamlet*, I. v.² *Hamlet*, III. iv.

the queen's life, he now insists that she is not to be treated over-harshly even in word.

All this leads to the conviction that the father's spirit ever watches his son in his task of vengeance : but that he only reveals himself to sight or hearing when some urgent need demands. How more finely and effectively could regard be shown either for the deep reverence due to the departed or the weak cravings of mortal men, the former forbidding, the latter demanding, a more immediate presence of those who have left this life ?

A similar desire (for I now at last go back to Aeschylus) 408 is obviously dominant in the *Choephoraë*. I will cite one instance, and there is none finer, from among many such. Every one will remember the conclusion of the solemn invocations recited in turn by the brother and sister, Orestes and Electra. After their passionate lyric out-pourings something of a more restrained and quieter tone properly follows :

- O. Set free my sire, O Earth, to watch the battle.
 E. O Persephassa, goodly victory grant !
 O. Remember, sire, the bath in which they slew thee !
 E. Remember thou the net they handselled so !
 O. In fetters not of brass wast thou snared, father.
 E. Yea, basely with that mantle they devised.
 O. Art thou not roused by these reproaches, father ?
 E. Dost thou not lift thine head for those thou lov'st.¹

Who, as he listens to these lines, would not be stirred and excited, expecting that, then and there, will arrive from the tomb 'Mycenae's leader of the warlike Achaeans',² eager to avenge his wrongs ? But Orestes stood in no need of such a portent, fully strengthened and supported as he was by the declaration of Apollo. To sum up the position shortly then ; in Aeschylus' play, Agamemnon is never allowed to speak, from just the same motives of affection,

¹ *Choeph.* 472 (489) (Plumptre).

² Virg. *Aen.* xi. 266.

reverence, and proper feeling for the dead, as make Shakespeare limit the appearance of Hamlet's father to two or three occasions. I speak here only of the piety or proper feeling due to the dead, the desire not to violate their sanctity, the instinct which restrains a poet from rashly and lightly mingling the things of this world and of the world below.

There is another sphere of 'piety', that of children towards their parents: and since the whole principle of it seems strangely violated by these deeds of the house of Agamemnon, it is worth while to inquire how Aeschylus has succeeded in meeting this awkward difficulty: and this brings me to the last point which I proposed to deal
409 with to-day. As you remember, perhaps, it was to have special reference to the characters of Orestes and Electra. Their distinguishing and main characteristic was their hatred of their mother on account of their devotion to their father—they are influenced by a piety, which may almost be called impiety: and on this head the problem was more difficult for Aeschylus than for Shakespeare, seeing that Hamlet was bidden to visit vengeance only on the adulterous king, leaving the queen unpunished. Now what is the chief device by which Aeschylus makes this tragic situation more bearable? It is by the same means to which we have so often referred, by the religious sanction of the oracle. Orestes is depicted as so thoroughly possessed by the thought that he is prepared to face all risks, even the risk of his life itself, provided that he can carry out his task. At night, by day, at home, abroad, this is the one thought which exercises and racks his mind. The same thing may be also said of Hamlet: but they undoubtedly differ in this, that with Hamlet one sees that there still linger 'sparks of earlier fires' (*veteris vestigia flammae*): he is carried away in various directions; anxieties, affections, even jests serve to distract his mind,

while Orestes, on the other hand, cannot venture for a moment to let his thoughts turn on anything save the one thought—that the God must at all costs be obeyed. What is the explanation of this complete obsession? It is, I think, that on Orestes is laid a more terrible duty: in his case it is not simple murder, but the murder of a mother that is commanded, and the more serious the deed, the more intently must the mind keep itself fixed upon the authority of him who gives the command. Observe again how calmly and quietly, and with what deliberation Orestes construes his mother's dream, one of the most dreadful augury:

So must she, as that monster dread she nourished,
Die cruel death: and I, thus serpentised,
Am here to slay her, as this dream portends.¹

It cannot be that he who nursed such thoughts in his mind was without apprehension of the Furies that threatened his own life. To all these thoughts he had long schooled his mind: indeed, he prays for his own death on hearing of his mother's shameful conduct towards his dead father:

Ah! thou hast told the whole full tale of shame;
Shall she not pay then for that outrage dire
Unto my father done,
So far as Gods prevail,
So far as my hands work?

May it be mine to smite her and then die!²

And therefore, too, at the end of the tragedy, when the Furies are already seated on the threshold, when he is fully conscious that he will be driven out of his mind, he reasserts that he has done nothing but what justice and the laws required; first inveighing in the sternest language against his mother, then urging as excuse the oracle of Apollo, and showing to all around the robe of Agamemnon with the blood-stains on it: to the end that it may appear beyond

¹ *Choeph.* 546 (Plumptre).

² *Choeph.* 432 (Plumptre).

doubt that he has done his work at divine instance, not of his own seeking : nor unwillingly merely, but even at the cost to himself of poignant and bitter grief.

Some remarks might here be added, did time allow, with reference to the character of Electra : who is not savage and prone to violent speech as she appears in Sophocles, nor does she show dutiful feeling towards her father alone. Listen, on the contrary, how gently she deals with her mother, even at the moment when she is most deeply stirred at the recollection of her father, slain before her eyes.

I strike an Arian stroke, and in the strain
Of Kissian mourner skilled,
Ye might have seen the stretching forth of hands,
With rendings of the hair, and random blows,
In quick succession given,
Dealt from above with arm at fullest length,
And with the beating still my head is stunned,
Battered and full of woe.¹

So chants the Chorus, seeming to hear again the strokes that wounded the king, and to see the right arm of the murderess dealing the wounds. And how does Electra comport herself? Surely she bursts forth in reproach and execration? But no, she chants a gentle, tender, sad and tearful dirge much more near to compassion than to resentment :

O mother, hostile found, and daring all !
With burial as of foe
411 Thou had'st the heart a ruler to inter,
His citizens not there,
A spouse unwept, with no lamentings loud.²

So too, when, earlier in the play, she was making offerings to the Gods of the lower world :

And to myself grant thou that I may be
Than that my mother wiser far of heart,
Holier in act.³

¹ *Choeph.* 423 (Plumptre).

² *Choeph.* 429 (Plumptre).

³ *Choeph.* 140 (Plumptre).

Nothing more gentle, more modest, could be uttered. The lines, too, in which she takes counsel with the Chorus concerning religious rites, when she first enters on the stage bearing sacred gifts, are inspired not by modesty but the very purest pious feeling :

Give me your advice in this,
What shall I say as these funereal gifts
I pour ? How shall I speak acceptably ?
How to my father pray ? What ? Shall I say
' I bring from loving wife to husband loved
Gifts '—from my mother ? No, I am not bold
Enough for that, nor know I what to speak,
Pouring this chrism on my father's tomb.¹

She is not moved to any rash extravagance, says nothing in passion, is ever mindful of law, human and divine : her mother she will hardly venture to reproach with crimes which are proved to all.

Her whole character, moreover, exhibits a striking picture of devotion to her brother : especially when from the colour of the lock of his hair or the traces of his foot-marks she at once intuitively divines Orestes' return. Aeschylus has shown great skill in making subtle variations and delicate distinctions in this beautiful episode : knowing well, as he did, that the traits of mutual affection would not be alike in brother and sister severally. I forgo examples owing to want of time. But, both in view of all these considerations and the main text of the play—the inculcation of respect and reverence towards kings and rulers—all, I think, without exception, who read 412 with the least care, are conscious that the whole terrible catastrophe is in great degree qualified and excused : their minds are less troubled at the inhuman matricide than impressed with the thought of the power of the

¹ *Choeph.* 84 (Plumptre).

gods ; they are left wondering what may be the issue of so weighty and difficult a situation. And thus Aeschylus naturally proceeds to solve this problem in the *Eumenides* : which solution I propose to consider to the best of my ability when I next have opportunity of addressing you.

After some brief introductory remarks upon the true standard of poetic criticism the problem of the last three tragedies of Aeschylus is stated upon the lines laid down at the beginning of the Eumenides. It is shown to be solved by a sort of appeal on the part of Orestes : and then follows a full discussion, first as to the Furies, against whose sentence Orestes appeals : next, of the part played by Apollo who suggests the appeal : and, finally, of the jurisdiction to which appeal is made, which is not to the Areopagus but to highest Jove himself.

I PROPOSE to-day to deal with the *Eumenides*, the third part of the celebrated trilogy, but, before I do so, I ask you, gentlemen, to allow me to spend a little more time upon a question which is intimately connected with our argument, and which will often occur to all lovers of Poetry. For when first I set myself to trace what may be called the essential characteristic of Poetry, I adopted this method : I asked in the case of every writer who is rightly credited with the divine name of poet, what is the one subject which stirs his enthusiasm, which carries him out of himself ? and this method implies that there are plainly as many kinds of Poetry as of opinions and of men (for Poetry, native and true Poetry, is nothing else than each poet's innermost feeling issuing in rhythmic language) : when, 414 I repeat, I first began to reflect on these things, there at once occurred to me a certain difficulty which I will to-day, as far as my power allows, attempt to deal with and remove.

There is no doubt, I think, that a considerable portion of mankind will be repelled completely by this view, and will not, without reluctance, suffer themselves to be drawn away from the charms of language and imagery, and the outward show and ornament of Poetry, in order to pry

into the secrets of the poet's mind. How, they demand, does it concern us, in what spirit and with what disposition the poet wrote, so long as his writings are such as delight and stimulate men's thought and feelings?

And it is only what might be expected if they drift into the same reasonings, with which those who hold in special dislike, above all kinds of literature, what is called Allegory, are wont to support their criticism. For when once the minds of readers begin to be drawn to and reflect upon something deeper—'when from the crowd and stage of life they withdraw into retirement'¹—I think, indeed, it makes little difference whether the result is produced by an allegorical symbolism or by the transference of the poet's own passion and disposition to actual characters. For either way, the reader who once surrenders himself heartily to the poet's real meaning, will have little leisure for mere ornament and prettiness, not even for those delightful charms which are removed at furthest distance from Epicurean indulgence, and approach very nearly to the secret truths of a higher philosophy.

But truly, indeed, as of virtue herself, so of genuine Poetry it must ever be said:

· But Virtue dwells on high; the gods before
Have placed the dew that drops from every pore;
And at the first to that sublime abode
Long, steep, th' ascent, and rough the rugged road.²

Now, those who are unwilling to face this toil and stress may indeed catch a glimpse with the outward eye of some light shadow of Poetry, but I doubt if they ever attain to knowledge of her form and feature with the inner eye of the mind. And so then, just as in perusal of perfect
415 Allegory, even when handled by Spenser himself, their interest soon flags and tires; so, even in other poems

¹ Hor. *Sat.* ii. 1. 71.

² Hesiod, *Works and Days*, i. 287 (Elton).

which they zealously profess to delight in, I should be inclined to believe they never reach the fountain sources themselves, but, as Cicero says,¹ merely follow after some tributary streams. On the other hand, if those who rightly appreciate Homer, for instance, or Aeschylus, feel less pleasure in Spenser, we must seek some other reason for this than the mere fact, for which they find fault with him, that his poem is one long-drawn-out allegory. At all events, it is quite clear that Allegory itself offers no obstacle to many of our countrymen, who take marvellous delight in the perusal of the work in which the way of a pious and holy life is presented under the similitude of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Whether, therefore, throughout the whole course of a poem one story is really told in fact and substance, another outwardly in words—which is the characteristic of Allegory: or whether we make the true tenor of a poem to depend not so much upon the things described as upon the spirit and temper of the poet, in either case it is clear that the force and beauty of true poetry is twofold. For not only are the direct themes of the poem themselves expressed with lucidity and beauty, but the whole work is tinged with the character and leanings of the poet as by some mysterious aroma: and in such wise, indeed, that all recognize that he bursts forth into such expression naturally, and not for artistic effect. Should either of these two qualities be lacking, the poetry will be maimed and defective, or absolutely not poetry at all: maimed, unless the subject be faithfully and finely treated; not poetry at all, should it not be obviously the spontaneous outburst of the poet's inmost feeling.

Returning to Aeschylus, let us test the value of this principle by considering the *Eumenides*. The problem of the whole trilogy, you will remember, stood to be solved

¹ *Acad.* i. 2. 8.

in this final play: the problem was to find some means of reconciliation not merely between conflicting feelings of men, but also between the conflicting views of the Gods themselves: it was to prevent our being left in doubt
416 how we were to estimate a man who, in reliance on a sacred oracle, has wrought a deed which, save for that sanction, must be pronounced atrocious. Now in order that this serious question may be fitly and surely settled, we see that the whole scheme of this last Tragedy is made to turn upon what we may call an appeal to a Supreme Court, just as the play which immediately precedes it (the *Choephorae*) has almost the effect of a religious service. And inasmuch as this appeal was not to be simple or isolated in effect, as governing only the case of Orestes, or whoever else at the time might perchance lie under a capital charge, but also extending to those controversies in which the most weighty laws, divine and human, are involved: we see, therefore, that the development of the play is by no means concluded when Orestes is absolved and exonerated. For unless Minerva had convinced even the Furies themselves, in spite of the dismissal of their cause, of the righteousness of her court's decision, the reader's mind must have remained in doubtful suspense, with deities on either side still urging contrary counsels.

And it is quite probable that, in the Promethean trilogy also, Aeschylus provided some such wise solution. For there too, as we have previously pointed out, a struggle between two orders of deities was of the essence of the story. But Time's unkindly action has denied us the solution of that problem, two parts of this renowned work being now lost to us. It is so much the more fortunate, that we to-day have the advantage of possessing the Oresteian trilogy intact, so that none can feel doubtful as to the reverent and pious quality of Aeschylus' spirit: since, unlike others, he was not satisfied to have traced the

fortunes of the house of Pelops to the desired issue, but he spent far more pains in showing not only that the majesty of the Gods remained intact, but that agreement and harmony reigned among them all ; so that men need no longer wander in perplexity through having no guide, or only one who pointed to different paths.

But the very course and tone of the poem testifies, unless I mistake, that it was only with the greatest difficulty that Aeschylus was enabled to extricate himself from these perplexities. And we well know that nothing more grievously troubles and pains those of religious feeling 417 than doubts as to the righteousness of Supreme Power, should they arise and be not fully removed.

Moreover, it is clear that Aeschylus shared in this reverent and honourable anxiety, simply from this fact, that he has purposely postponed the solution till the last possible moment. Even 'into sanctuary', if I may use the phrase, the avenging company of Furies pursue Orestes. His one aim is to make good his escape : he only just eludes, like some hunted animal, by the merest fraction of time, the clutches of his pursuers. I can hardly believe that celebrated first entrance of the horrible and terrible Chorus can be read without a sort of breathless anxiety, such as is wont to possess the mind and eye of those who watch the very crisis of a pursuit and escape. This the poet most graphically brings before us by the mere stage management alone, when the curtain first rises, presenting openly within the temple what the Pythian priestess had sketched in her prologue :

I see

Upon the central stone a God-loathed man,
Sitting as suppliant, and with hands that dripped
Blood-drops, and holding sword but newly drawn,
And branch of olive from the topmost growth,
With amplest tufts of white wool meetly wreathed ;

For this I will say clearly. And a troop
Of women strange to look at sleepeth there.¹

And here observe the consummate judgement exhibited by Aeschylus. For since a sight savage and horrible beyond belief was about to be presented to their eyes, he warns his audience beforehand what they may expect, lest, in sheer incredulity, they revolt at the appearance of the Furies when suddenly seen. And then there is the further expedient, not merely skilful, but fraught with deepest human feeling, that this happens in the early morning, at a time when the priestess, preoccupied with solemn things, was moving to perform her usual tasks, little thinking of anything of the kind :

If Hellas pilgrims sends,
Let them approach by lot, as is our law :
For as the god guides I give oracles,²

—at that very moment she encounters nothing but what
418 is hateful and repulsive, exciting terror, panic, and disgust :

Dread things to tell, and dread for eyes to see,
Have sent me back again from Loxias' shrine.³

Whence we can see how it is wont to chance, contrary to their hope and against their will, that even worthy and religious men are not always able to secure, even in ministry of divine things, that peace and satisfaction which they seek for : but that, around the very altar, and within the secret sanctuary, their minds are distracted and troubled, perhaps by recollection of past misdeeds, or by the uncertainties and constant unrest suggested by the doubtful doom of humankind. And I think this same fact appears even more plainly, when the Fates follow Orestes for the second time, and appear close upon his track in the very temple of Minerva. If any one could ever feel confident

¹ *Eum.* 40 (Plumptre). ² *Eum.* 31 (Plumptre).

³ *Ibid.*

of safety and refuge anywhere, we should assuredly believe that that inmost secret sanctuary was free from all danger, and that any one was safe who was hiding there not merely under the protection of the goddess, but within the very shelter of her arms. But even there, too, these huntresses are in a moment on the track of their prey :

Lo ! here are clearest traces of the man :
Follow thou up that dumb informer's hints :
For as the hound pursues a wounded fawn,
So by red blood and oozing gore track we.

He, it is true, in full security,
Clasping the statue of the deathless goddess,
Would fain now take his trial at our hands.
This may not be.¹

You would suppose they could not press in more closely : yet something still remains to heighten the horror in no small degree. For they not only encircle him with their menacing dances, but petrify him with magic song and chant :

And over him as slain,
We raise this chant of madness, frenzy-working,
The hymn the Erinnyes love,
A spell upon the soul, a lyreless strain
That withers up men's strength.²

419

The lines seem almost to bring before our eyes that deadly snake whose mere gaze and aspect, or the horrid hiss of its advance, so strikes terror into birds that they are paralysed and fall into its jaws of their own accord.

All these descriptions are so splendid, if we only judge them by the test of poetic 'vividness', that it should surprise no one if most men, while duly honouring the philosophy of Aeschylus, yet at the same time contend that he was not seriously concerned about anything, except

¹ *Eum.* 244 (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 329 (Plumptre).

those artistic beauties which, as they insist, are the peculiar glory of Poetry. But if they once read with more kindly eyes even the *Eumenides* alone, willing to credit the poem with an aim a little more sacred and the possession of an under-meaning, it is almost impossible to say how greatly their delight would be increased even in that one pleasure, which they praise at the expense of all others ; and how much more deeply skilful narration, or smooth sweetness of the verse, or charm of the imagery, would penetrate and permeate the inmost recesses of their hearts, when bathed and illuminated in a kind of heavenly light, glorifying a picture already beautiful in itself.

And recall, I beg, to your minds just one verse—the single line with which Clytemnestra rouses the slumbering Furies, as so many dogs, to pursuit of their rich prey :

Chase him, and wither with a fresh pursuit.¹

The very words seem to glow and burn : such is the rush of the action. But if the reader has in mind the deeply profound significance of the verse, suggesting as it does the deepest pang which tortures men's hearts :

While the vexed mind, her own tormentor, plies
A scorpion scourge, unmarked by human eyes !²

420 —can it be doubted for a moment, that the force and high-wrought feeling of the bodeful utterance are immensely heightened ?

‘Chase him and wither with a fresh pursuit.’ The words seem to say : ‘No sure peace can he enjoy who has once committed foul wrong towards a father or mother. It may be that, for an interval, sheltered in sanctuary, or under the favour of some protecting deity, his mind has some rest : but soon the Fates will return ; no time, no distance can bar their approach.’

¹ *Eum.* 139 (Plumptre).

² *Juv.* xiii. 195 (Gifford).

But without further insistence on isolated passages, let us now consider as a whole the general significance of Orestes' flight—that is, of the entire play; I mean the implicit significance that lies beneath the surface, what may perhaps be called its *secret meaning*. It turns mainly on three factors: for since the sum of the whole plot, as has been said, is contained in an appeal, we must inquire, first, whose decree is appealed against; secondly, at whose instance; thirdly, to whom the appeal is made.

First of all, then, who are these Eumenides, or, at any rate, what do they claim for themselves?—these Eumenides whose decree we see here called in question? Called in question, I say, yet not so called in question but that the reverence due to them is most religiously observed: not even the great Gods lightly pardon and restore to favour those whom these have condemned, unless they too give their consent and grant forgiveness. Such, indeed, is the attitude and disposition of the dread goddesses that we at once perceive that they personify the Divine wrath just as it presents itself to wicked and guilty men, when once touched by remorse, or to the severest judges of the actions of others.

To begin with, not without grave meaning are revolting form and horrible aspect ascribed to them:

421

Wingless, though, are these,
And swarth, and every way abominable.
They snort with breath that none may dare approach,
And from their eyes a loathsome humour pours.¹

From the *Choephoraë*, too, we gather the widespread belief that vipers streamed as hair from their heads:

Dark-robed, and all their tresses hang entwined
With many serpents.²

¹ *Eum.* 51 (Plumptre).

² *Choeph.* 1049 (Plumptre).

And in this tragedy Apollo's menacing speech seems to imply the same thing :

Lest, smitten with a serpent winged and bright,
Forth darted from my bow-string golden-wrought,
Thou in sore pain bring up dark foam, and vomit
The clots of blood thou suck'dst from human veins.¹

In this passage no obscure allusion is made to another fact, which sounds even more revolting and more unworthy of the perfect dignity of an avenging deity—the fact that these evil demons silently and imperceptibly drain away in loathsome fashion the very lifeblood of the sinner :

But thou must give to us to suck the blood
Red from thy living members : yea, from thee,
May I gain meal of drink undrinkable !
And, having dried thee up, I'll drag thee down
Alive to bear the doom of matricide.²

Some will; perhaps, be inclined to urge in excuse the feeling of the common people regarding daemonic beings of such horrible cruelty, which they say still even now survives and indeed flourishes in some regions. Nor should I deny by any means that there is a vast difference, judged by the standard of highest Poetry, whether a writer advances his own fancies, or is only adapting popular legends with a view to heighten magic or religious horror. For it hardly seems likely that a portentous belief should be spread over a whole nationality unless it be one which
422 nearly touches the most intimate and genuine human feelings. But that Aeschylus had in mind something greater than the bare recital of a popular legend is evident from this alone ; that closely associated with this revolting vengeance are the pains and penalties to be suffered after this life :

There thou shalt see, if any other man
Has sinned in not revering God or guest

¹ *Eum.* 181 (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 264 (Plumptre).

Or parents dear, that each receiveth there
The recompense of sin that Vengeance claims.¹

Thus their speech seems to hurry on to these infernal regions as being chief of all in importance, only lightly mentioning, in passing, this ghoulisn prey on living victims : whose very intent, moreover, is to effect easily, by their means, the picture of a mind wasting and pining away through the recollection of evil deeds :

Nay, nor Apollo, nor Athena's might
Can save thee from the doom of perishing,
Outcast, not knowing where to look for joy,
The bloodless food of demons, a mere shade.²

Observe that the doom is wrought, not so much by direct purpose or righteous judgement, as by the passionate working of the man's own mind : whence so much the more suitable becomes that simile of dogs in full chase, almost a commonplace in this connexion :

Thou, phantom-like, dost hunt thy prey and criest,
Like hound that never rests from care of toil.³

And in another passage we are told that their one and only task is to inflict penalties, and that they owed their being to this one end only—that they might deal severely with evil-doers :

They owe their birth to evils ; for they dwell
In evil darkness, yea in Tartarus
Beneath the earth, and are the hate and dread
Of all mankind and of Olympian Gods.⁴

Moreover, they themselves in their own choral chants only claim for themselves authority to impose punishments 423 and to exercise a silent inquisition over guilty men. The opening, in fact, of their first chorus partakes of the nature of an appeal : the Furies appeal to Night their mother,

¹ *Eum.* 269 (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 299 (Plumptre).

³ *Eum.* 131 (Plumptre).

⁴ *Eum.* 71 (Plumptre).

not to suffer them to become a laughing-stock to the younger deities, who are too little inclined to severity :

O mother who did'st bear me, mother Night,
A terror of the living and the dead,
Hear me, Oh hear !
The son of Leto puts me to disgrace
And robs me of my spoil.¹

And then they declare that their function extends to all ages and to all countries, so that only a state in which there is no crime or guilt can do without them :

This lot the all-pervading Destiny
Hath spun, to hold its ground for evermore,
That we should still attend
On him on whom there rests the guilt of blood
Of kin shed causelessly,
Till earth lie o'er him.²

Again, in so many words, they confess themselves banished from the court and banquets of the deities above and to be wholly without share in their honours or counsels ;

Such lot was then assigned us at our birth :
From us the Undying Ones must hold aloof :
Nor is there one who shares
The banquet-meal with us ;
In garments white I have nor part nor lot.³

And when, at last, we reach the point at which, with their consent, their cause is submitted to mortal decision, not even then do these Furies claim any functions save those which deal with revenge and punishment. In an earlier chorus they boasted that their powers had been granted by the eternal law of heaven ; here they complain that great will be the loss to human life if their rights are withdrawn :

Now there will be an outbreak of new laws : . . .
This deed will prompt forthwith

¹ *Eum.* 322 (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 335 (Plumptre).

³ *Eum.* 348 (Plumptre).

All mortal men to callous recklessness. . . .
 For since no wrath on evil deeds will creep
 Henceforth from those who watch
 With wild, fierce souls the evil deeds of men,
 I will let loose all crime.¹

This is a faithfully-drawn picture of that over-rigid ⁴²⁴ severity with which men of sterner nature generally meet the advocates of mercy and indulgence.

In short, we may not unfairly, perhaps, construe these celebrated Furies as typifying Divine Justice on a certain side of it—that, namely, which is wont most to approve itself to those who form, as the mass of men do, hasty and superficial judgements. They are conscious that the world is, broadly speaking, governed according to the law that, generally, good befalls good men and evil overtakes the bad : and, in consequence, they cannot easily acquiesce wheresoever, either by chance or design, things seem otherwise ordered. To them it is a shameful thing that a penitent man should go scot-free.

Thus much for those from whose decree the appeal is made : now let us proceed to consider the supporter of the appeal, namely, Apollo. It is obvious to every one that his character affords no slight proof of divine clemency and goodwill to men. Deeds such as these qualities produce are just what the ancients report of Apollo : by his agency it is, mainly, that mortals enjoy some more intimate intercourse with the supreme deities ; he, more than other Gods, mixes freely and gladly in the societies and conversations of men. Indeed, there were not lacking old traditions, such as the story of his tending the flocks of Admetus, or of the stratagems by means of which he had outwitted the Fates :

Thou did'st o'erthrow, yea, thou, laws hoar with age,
 And drug with wine the ancient Goddesses.²

¹ *Eum.* 493 (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 727 (Plumptre).

Clearly, then, Apollo only acts in accord with his known character, whenever, in this play too, he favours unduly even guilty men.

It is said, moreover, that we have here traces of an older theology and of a more ancient race of Gods between whom and Apollo with his fellow deities there rankled no slight ill-will: this is most certainly true, and upon it mainly turns the whole structure, both of these three plays
425 and of the *Prometheus*: though it must not therefore be supposed that anything is thus detracted from the poet's conception, which was meant to depict the ferment and unrest of human affairs so long as the divine governance remained doubtful and dark. Rather it well became a consummate artist to take up the beliefs already held by ordinary men and weave them to their fitting uses and to the purposes of his philosophy. But we previously dealt with this position when the *Prometheus Vincitus* was under discussion. For, just as there the goodness of the Supreme Ruler was called in question, on account of evils which may be called Natural; so here we have those who pass strictures on His equity by reason of the uncertainties of human duty when rewards and penalties are not governed by unwavering law. Indeed, in every age, and even with the light of Heaven's revelation, there have been those who denied the Deity to be at once pitiful and just: either by reason of the more stern and unbending injunctions of the Jewish law, or because of that long-suffering mercy which characterizes perfect and true religion. Thus Aeschylus, having transferred this controversy from the philosophers' schools to the councils and assemblies of the Gods, intends Apollo, together with the younger deities, as representative of that more merciful view. Hence, too, in the shadow of his temple, even the very Furies themselves are at last appeased, and for a space Orestes enjoys an undisturbed retreat, owing to the veneration for the pious and holy sanctuary:

And now thou see'st these fierce ones captive ta'en,
These loathly maidens fallen fast in sleep.¹

Again, weigh well the words of Apollo, who cannot endure
the sight of them :

Out, out, I bid you, quickly from this temple ;
Go forth, and leave this shrine oracular.

This is no house where ye may meetly come,
But there where heads upon the scaffold lie,
And eyes are gouged, and throats of men are cut,
And mutilation mars the bloom of youth,
Where men are maimed and stoned to death, and groan
With bitter wailing, 'neath the spine impaled ; 426
Hear ye what feast ye love, and so become
Loathed of the Gods ? Yes, all your figure's fashion
Points clearly to it. Such as ye should dwell
In cave of lion battening upon blood,
Nor tarry in these sacred precincts here,
Working defilement. Go, and roam afield
Without a shepherd, for to flock like this
Not one of all the Gods is friendly found.²

Here he most happily indicates the attitude of such men
as maintain that the punishment even of wicked men ill
accords with Divine mercy.

And the poet scatters here and there other suggestions,
which would encourage Orestes in his appeal. The shade
of Clytemnestra herself spontaneously allows that the
deities in the shades below are in sympathy with Orestes,
not with herself :

Nor fails reproach
Among the shades that I a murderess am :
And so in shame I wander, and I tell you
That at their hands I bear worst form of blame.
And much as I have borne from nearest kin,
Yet not one God is stirred to wrath for me,
Though done to death by matricidal hands.³

¹ *Eum.* 67 (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 179 (Plumptre).

³ *Eum.* 96 (Plumptre).

A speech which implicitly confesses that she has herself suffered a due and righteous retribution.

Then there is that most impressive fact of all, that here too, as in the *Choephora*, the son Orestes is conscious of the silent presence of Agamemnon his father, though not so as to be discerned by eyes of men. It is pre-eminently this support which enables him to present an undaunted front even before his judges :

I trust my sire will send help from the tomb.¹

It was to be taken, too, as of good omen, that Orestes had passed through many purifying experiences before he ventured to approach Minerva's threshold :

427 For the blood fails and fades from off my hands ;
 The guilt of matricide is washed away.
 For when 'twas fresh, it then was all dispelled,
 At Phoebus' shrine, by spells of slaughtered swine.
 Long would the story be, if told complete,
 Of all I joined in harmless fellowship.²

That is almost exactly the line of thinking whereby simple and good men are wont to comfort themselves, when they question if it be possible for them ever to be forgiven their sins. They generally fall back upon their instinctive belief that they will not be utterly cast off by a kindly Deity whilst they are able to approach His altars, to pay their vows, and to offer prayer to Him. In such wise did the woman in the Book of Judges soothe the apprehensions of her husband : ' If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things.' ³

So too Orestes, while his case is still undecided, while he himself is almost o'erwrought by physical weakness, by

¹ *Eum.* 601 (598) (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 280 (Plumptre).

³ Judges xiii. 23 (A.V.).

long wandering, by sleepless watchings, still denies that he any way repents himself of having obeyed the counsel of Apollo. When the Furies scornfully demand,

The prophet-God prompt thee to matricide ? ¹

he answers as became one confident in his piety,

Yea, and till now I do not blame my lot.²

As much as to say, ' Gladly can I bear the loss of all things so long as Apollo, to whom I first surrendered myself, be propitious towards me.'

Lastly, which was the most hopeful augury of all, the character of Orestes himself arouses not pity merely, but a certain respect, through his modesty, piety, and greatness of soul. It is surprising how few words he utters, protagonist though he is, and though the scheme of the whole play depends and turns upon him alone: as if Aeschylus intended to exhibit in his person what sort of ⁴²⁸ address and what quality of appeal best become a man who has admitted his crime. There is nothing laboured, nothing artificial, nothing elaborately calculated to elicit compassion: all is dignified, staid, modest: not for a moment does he forget that he speaks in presence of high and holy deity, with the choice between death and salvation lying close at hand. In short: Orestes himself declares that in naught does he act on his own prompting, but as one who has surrendered himself soul and body to follow the commands of his lord Apollo.

O'er land and water travelling alike,
Keeping great Loxias' charge oracular,
I come, O goddess, to thy shrine and statue:
Here will I stay and wait the trial's issue.³

Consistently with this, he relies on Apollo, even in presence of his judges, not so much as an advocate of his

¹ *Eum.* 598 (595) (Plumptre). ² *Eum.* 599 (596) (Plumptre).

³ *Eum.* 240 (Plumptre).

cause (for the rules of that rigid court did not admit the presence of advocates) but as what was called an 'exegete', or expounder of any difficulty or obscurity in the law. The part played by such an 'exegete', together with many other details touching the forms and procedure of Attic law, has lately been elucidated with conspicuous learning and charm of style by a German commentator upon this play—Müller. Assuredly, it admirably accords with the views laid down by this celebrated scholar that in the conduct of the cause Apollo's voice is not heard until a question arises of the interpretation of the law: for as to fact Orestes admits it at once, openly confessing that he killed his mother:

Now bear thou witness, and declare to me,
 Apollo, if I slew her righteously;
 For I the deed, as fact, will not deny.
 But whether right or wrong this deed of blood
 Seem in thine eyes, judge thou that these may hear.¹

429 The attitude of mind here exhibited is, unless I err, one closely and straitly joined with a genuine and living religious feeling: namely, that it behoves mortals but rarely and with reluctance to attempt debate upon the principles of divine law. In such a cause as this the sole part for men is to decide, if we can, the question of fact. On the question of right, it is enough for us that He Himself has spoken, who in his own good time, without any advocacy from us poor men, will defend His own law. Further, the prejudice against the appellant's claim was considerably reduced, when the defence of the horrible deed was shifted to another, especially to a god.

Finally, this device served also to remind the audience that the question at issue was not merely the condemnation of Orestes: but one of the most vital of the truths of religion. For when gods are openly contending with

¹ *Eum.* 612 (609) (Plumptre).

gods, can we imagine any who can rightly intervene to settle such a dispute save the God of gods ?

But, it may be objected, the appeal is not made to any god, but only, and that by Minerva's counsel, to the Court of Areopagus. So little, it is said, was the father of Tragedy actuated here by any thought of religion, that, plainly and avowedly, he is influenced by two quite other motives : first, to recommend to his fellow Athenians a certain special and exalted veneration for justice : secondly, to press on their confidence that renowned Court of Areopagus, the pre-eminent guardian and glory of their city, but whose authority, at that very period, was being shaken and undermined. Such motives are quite rightly attributed to him, yet they also leave ample room for the deeper truths of religion which are so characteristic of Aeschylus. To take a parallel case : what if it is true that, taking the opportunity of the fact that Orestes was a native of Mycenae, our poet has more than once praised an alliance with Argos which Athens at that time had either actually concluded or was about to conclude ? So, what if he intended to sanction for ever, by a divine prophecy, the Court of Areopagus, to which the natural thread of his story had led him, at a time when the partisan attacks 430 of demagogues was rashly tampering with it ?

In this, I say,
The reverent awe its citizens shall own,
And fear, awe's kindred, shall restrain from wrong
By day, nor less by night, so long as they,
The burghers, alter not themselves their laws :
But if with drain of filth and tainted soil
Clear river thou pollute, no drink thou'lt find.

But rightly shrinking, owning awe like this,
Ye then would have a bulwark of your land,
A safeguard for your city, such as none
Boast or in Skythia's or in Pelops' clime.
This council I establish pure from bribe,

Reverend, and keen to act, for those that sleep
An ever-watchful sentry of the land.¹

It is my opinion (as I have more than once indicated) that it was more than anything else the special task of an Athenian poet to interweave such advice and counsel as he desired from time to time to impress upon his fellow citizens, with some other teaching of loftier strain directly associated with all that is righteous, holy, and eternal. Would he not also add greatly to the praise of his native Athens in showing it to have been pre-eminently in this city that not only human but divine law had fount and origin?

Consequently, inasmuch as the nature of the appeal which is described in the *Eumenides* involves a divine appellant from a divine decree, we cannot doubt for a moment that it will be a god to whom the appeal is to be made, and that the affair will be remitted to the settlement of gods, not of men. In fact, the final judgement in the cause is not assigned even to Minerva herself: but all refer to her father Jove, the 'Saviour' (as he is styled), the resolution of the whole case.

In the first place, we have an indication given of his supreme authority in the fact that his name is placed last of all in the list of the gods of Delphi, to whom in due order
431 the Pythian priestess does homage, in the opening scene of this tragedy. For last of all she commemorates:

Zeus most High, supreme Accomplisher.²

Next, Apollo, though he names no one, clearly indicates that he it is too, who may, at some time, undertake anew the cause of a suppliant who has been put to death or left unheard:

And I will help him and my suppliant free;
For dreadful among Gods and mortals too
The suppliant's curse, should I abandon him.³

¹ *Eum.* 693 (690) (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 28 (Plumptre).

³ *Eum.* 232 (Plumptre).

Truly an utterance of deep meaning, which seems to derive from some loftier creed: implying that the intercourse of the celestial deities too, whether among themselves or with mankind, is limited and governed by law: that is to say (to adopt Cicero's phrase) by highest reason, which, deep-rooted in natural things, commands what should be done and forbids the contrary.¹ Apollo intimates that, since this law will not be futile nor dead, the resentment of a spurned suppliant will not be without its terrors even for himself. And why? Because he, too, reverences a God higher in authority, older in length of rule, than himself.

And indeed, from the first entrance of Minerva upon the stage, we are conscious, unless I mistake, of the near presence of the Supreme Ruler. We recognize some more august—indeed, to put it in a word—diviner presence. Nowhere does she condescend to reproach: never, even in argument, does she use bitter or stinging words: she proceeds throughout with quiet and even address: just as if she manifested the eternal wisdom of Supreme Deity.

Note, too, how exactly her entrance upon the stage suits 432 one who has to play such a part: she is brought forward with quiet, even movement:

Thence came I, plying foot that never tires,
Flapping my aegis-folds, no need of wings,
My chariot drawn by young and vigorous steeds.²

If we compare this with the Homeric line describing the same goddess (together with Juno):

Smooth as the sailing doves, they glide along³

—Aeschylus will, I fancy, be thought superior by every one; whether because the two warlike goddesses seem somewhat inaptly compared to doves, the gentlest of birds: or because Aeschylus has exactly caught the virile, undaunted, unwearied spirit of Minerva:

Flapping her aegis-folds

¹ Cic. *de Leg.* i. 18.

² *Eum.* 406 (403) (Plumptre).

³ *Il.* v. 778 (Pope, 971).

—whence it is all the more surprising that, being of such a character, she hesitates to proceed forthwith to adjudge the Oresteian cause on her own responsibility: especially since both sides submit it to her. But it was to be made plain, in her person, how little befitting, in such problems as these, a rash or hasty sentence given on the spur of the moment, would be: since their secret principle lies hidden among the mysteries of highest Jove. To him, therefore, without delay even his own interpreter appeals: for the cause was too subtle for dispensing with his supreme arbitrament: religion giving its sanction on the one side to the suppliant Orestes, on the other to the dread goddesses. She names, certainly, a picked list of her own citizens to act as judges: but any one may see that in deed and in truth the judgement will rest with Jove himself alone. This honour, however, was accorded to the Athenian populace, the worshippers of Minerva, that they should be the mouthpiece through whom the edicts of supreme power
433 were declared publicly. In fact Apollo, during the course of the trial, appeals to Jove in express terms:

Ne'er have I spoken on prophetic throne
Of man, or woman, or of commonwealth,
But as great Zeus, Olympian Father, bade.¹

Carefully consider the two following lines, which form the conclusion of the same speech:

I bid you [*Turning to the court of jurymen*] follow out
my Father's will;

No oath can be of greater might than Zeus.

We have here the very deepest evidence of a genuine piety: not even men pledged by oath are to speak according to their own convictions, should it by any means sufficiently appear that the decree of Jove would be opposed to them.

Moreover Orestes, when the cause is finally decided, while according his gratitude to Minerva and Apollo, still

¹ *Eum.* 619 (616) (Plumptre).

seems to accord chief honour to Jove by his special and peculiar name of 'Saviour':

The man 's an Argive once again,
And dwells upon his father's heritage,
Because of Pallas and of Loxias,
And Zeus, the true third Saviour, all o'erruling,
Who, touched with pity for my father's fate,
Saves me, beholding these my mother's pleaders.¹

Finally, Pallas herself soothes and pacifies the Furies, enraged at the failure of their case, by simply urging that thus was the will of Jove, by whose decree all must needs abide, though they might not see clearly the law or principle on which the decision was based:

But the clear evidence of Zeus was given.²

If any one should even yet deem himself as suffering unjustly, let that man know that what Jove has once ratified can be neither blotted out nor changed by any device of man. At his own peril does any one seek to 434 oppose it:

I too, yes I, trust Zeus. Need I say more?
I only of the high Gods know the keys
Of chambers where the sealed-up thunder lies.³

I doubt if any one of the poets has uttered a sentence full of warning at once so impressive and so wise. Certainly, I do not apprehend that any one will venture to compare with it Virgil's celebrated 'Quos ego'.⁴ But even finer still is it, that this one utterance of Minerva, in a manner, comprises the solution of the problem suggested by the whole trilogy. For whatever may befall Orestes, the justice of his cause is declared simply by the fact that the Supreme Father of all approves him.

¹ *Eum.* 760 (757) (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 800 (797) (Plumptre).

³ *Eum.* 829 (825) (Plumptre).

⁴ *Aen.* i. 135.

Thus I may sum up the whole matter in a sentence : deities being at strife one with another, those of stern justice at strife with those of mercy—even divine sagacity and prudence can find no end to the controversy save this, that all be willing readily and contentedly to submit their case to the infinite power of Supreme Deity. For He—being always able to effect what He wishes, and Himself always overflowing with perfect happiness—has no need or reason at any time to lay down anything beyond what is right and lawful. So that the motto which in human affairs is associated with tyrants alone, ‘ This is my will : this I command,’ ought, where Deity is concerned, not only to be endured, but whole-heartedly welcomed.

You now have before you the chief article of Aeschylean theology, and I should like each of you to compare it for himself with that part of the Holy Scriptures which more than any other deals with the laws and principles of the religion, such indeed as it was, which the ancient philosophers enjoyed. I mean the Book of Job, which is apparently the only book of Scripture addressed to men
435 who had no revealed law from Heaven. Is not the argument of that book concerning the inequalities of human life, this—that in the last resort everything depends on the absolute will of the one Great Ruler, of whom, as you grant that He is omnipotent, you must concede that He cannot will what is unjust.

When Minerva, however, in giving her vote in favour of Orestes, subjoins some special reasons of her own :

For I no mother own that brought me forth,
And saving that I wed not, I prefer
The male with all my heart, and make mine own
The father's cause, nor will above it place
A woman's death, who slew her own true lord,
The guardian of her house¹

¹ *Eum.* 739 (736) (Plumptre).

—we must not imagine that so weighty a cause turns on such a trivial argument. Minerva is not, in this address, dealing with the case as a whole, but merely explaining how it comes about that she is destitute of feminine feeling, and without the least sympathy for the murdered mother. It hence results, that the wisdom which is cognate with, and most resembling the Gods, is virile, chaste, self-controlled, and such as can never be dethroned by any emotion: but we shall never find that it attempts anything without divine aid.

We have now sufficiently shown how in these three orders of Gods arose all the elements of a most solemn appeal: we need only add that, since the older and stricter order was cast in the suit, special care was needed lest the honour paid to them in the past should suffer any diminution. For Aeschylus by no means meant that the merciful deities should in any way triumph over those of sterner traditions, but that one and the same power and spirit regarding a question of highest piety should inspire all the divine powers. And so, though Orestes is acquitted, the curtain does not yet fall. For the Furies must be pacified, and that not only for the sake of the city and the crops, but still more for the sake of human life and character: lest any one assume he may be a pious and good man though destitute of holy and sober fear. Observe how tactfully Minerva 436 addresses herself to the task of appeasing their wrath:

Nay, list to me, and be not over-grieved:
Ye have not been defeated, but the cause
Came fairly to a tie, no shame to thee.¹

In other words, she wishes it recognized from the mere fact of the even voting, how far from clear the question really was: for this fact alone implies, not slight, but honour and

¹ *Eum.* 797 (794) (Plumptre).

respect. She proceeds to conciliate them with hospitable words :

For lo ! I promise, promise faithfully,
That, seated on your hearths with shining thrones,
Ye shall find cavern homes in righteous land,
Honoured and worshipped by these citizens.¹

These lines are a counterpart and reply to those in which the Chorus had earlier, at the beginning of the play, described its duties :

Fulfilling tasks dishonoured, unrevered,
Apart from all the Gods,
In foul and sunless gloom,
Driving o'er rough steep road both those that see
And those whose eyes are dark.²

Thus, those who hitherto were wont to wander far and wide, keenly intent on their dread pursuit, are now promised by Minerva a secure and certain home, and—as one may fairly put it—the freedom of the state of Athens. Again, when they throw out menacing words in the way which irritated men, especially those advanced in years, are wont to do, she supplements her promises by the much-prized addition of her own fellowship and that of all the gods :

Lull thou the bitter storm of that dark surge,
As dwelling with me, honoured and revered ;
And thou with first-fruits of this wide champaign,
Offerings for children's birth and wedlock-rites,
Shalt praise these words of mine for evermore.³

Here, too, the lines correspond with those sung by the Furies concerning themselves :

Such lot was then assigned us at our birth ;
From us the Undying Ones must hold aloof :
437 Nor is there one who shares
The banquet-meal with us ;
In garments white I have nor part nor lot.⁴

¹ *Eum.* 807 (804) (Plumptre).

² *Eum.* 388 (385) (Plumptre).

³ *Eum.* 835 (832) (Plumptre).

⁴ *Eum.* 348 (Plumptre).

In fact, they who formerly were banished from civic life are now, in a manner, inscribed as Athenian citizens : they who once exercised a mere executioner's office will now watch over joyful marriage ties, or be fortunate and good-omened attendants on human births. And, in brief, this mutual understanding effects that henceforth, while nominally spirits of the world below, they are in deed and truth to be ranked among the Olympian deities.

The ancient critics perceived that in this fact especially the general force of the play centred : most of them, in epitomizing it, carefully insert this sentence : ' Having made the Furies gentle, he gave them the name of Gracious Goddesses.' Not that the actual name Gracious Goddesses (*Eumenides*) is met with anywhere in the play itself : they are, however, once or twice called ' august deities ', which implies the same meaning. But the name is of no importance : the one point to be grasped is, that the Furies, their disposition being softened, are enrolled as allies of the power of Him who alone sways all : and thus that no family or State will prosper which refuses them their rightful reverence :

Now from these strange forms and fearful
 See I to my townsmen coming,
 E'en to these, great meed of profit ;
 For if ye, with kindly welcome,
 Honour these as kind protectors,
 Then shall ye be famed as keeping,
 Just and upright in all dealings,
 Land and city evermore.¹

Finally, Aeschylus, as his wont is, takes care that all this shall be made manifest, not through mere statement only, but by ocular demonstration. And the *Eumenides* are conducted in solemn state, with kindled torches and sacred hymn, from the Acropolis to their own temple, or rather

¹ *Eum.* 993 (990) (Plumptre).

cavern, in the neighbouring valley. And so, at the very close of the poem, when the circle of care and crime is
 438 complete, he brings us back to the serene calm from which he started. At the beginning and at the end he has introduced the thought of the protection of the gods, above all of Jove the Supreme God, as the one means of salvation. There, 'Zeus Most High, Supreme Accomplisher' gives ear to the prayers of the Greeks suppliant at Delphi: here,

You, 'neath the wings of Pallas ever staying,
 The Father honoureth.¹

And we see that, as in song or music, just so in this noblest work—be it Poetry or Philosophy—the strain is happily closed by the same note which broke silence in the beginning:

From Zeus let us begin and with Zeus make end, ye
 Muses.²

¹ *Eum.* 1004 (1001) (Plumptre).

² Theocritus, xvi. 1.

Discussion of views of Aeschylus concerning the character and disposition of women, partly as deduced from the qualities of Io in the Prometheus Bound : but mainly as illustrated in The Suppliants.

BOTH in ancient times and in our own, gentlemen, there have been those who have criticized Aeschylus as lacking the tenderer emotions and all power of describing the affections of women, and their household duties and cares. The Athenians, who were undoubtedly judges entitled to respect, found fault with him for this very fact, that he hardly touches a topic which, to most writers, seems so fruitful—namely, the ill-omened love-affairs of women. And certainly, in Aristophanes, Aeschylus is made to boast :

But I never allow'd of your lewd Sthenoboeas,
Or filthy, detestable Phaedras—not I—
Indeed, I should doubt if my drama throughout
Exhibit an instance of woman in love.¹

Whereas Euripides, representing, I imagine, those who at that time—more, indeed, by the daring effrontery of their treatment than by its wisdom—dominated the Attic stage, replies :

No, you were too stern for an amorous turn,
For Venus and Cupid too stern and too stupid.²

Aeschylus' Pythagorean muse was evidently too chaste 440 and austere to please sufficiently their voluptuous fancy.

But I always wonder how it is that these so-called deficiencies should be endorsed by that most illustrious master of modern criticism whose opinions in such matters

¹ *Frogs*, 1075 (Frere, 1335).

² *Ibid.*

are, in his native Germany, justly venerated as oracles; I mean Schlegel, who has laid it down in express terms, that Aeschylus, being little more than an unrefined cynic, was incapable of these more tender strains of poetry.

And yet, in this controversy, perhaps one might not unreasonably dispense with quoting examples, since it is plain, on the very face of the thing, that it is scarcely possible any poet whatsoever can feel strenuously with the brave, piously with the religious, and then be cool and apathetic where the honour and praise of noble women are concerned. For the essence of all human virtues—even those of most widely severed character—is one and the same. The dignity and modesty severally characteristic of the soldier, the maiden, and the priest have singularly much in common: hence we have no reason for expecting to find that a writer who has given us with perfect expression a drama ‘full of the War God’, like the story of Thebes, would be remote in sympathy from a more delicate and quiet virtue.

But, after all, the mere mention of the name Iphigeneia by itself is enough to clear Aeschylus from so unjust a suggestion. I will go further, and assert that no poet—not even among those who, either from ancient tradition or taught by revealed philosophy, have held that something holy and divine dwells in woman—none, I say, of them all, has ever more sweetly and truly described those sweetest affections, whether of daughter, or wife, or, finally (which these detractors deny), of a highborn noble woman.

441 ‘But our author has not—like Euripides—honoured the story of Iphigeneia with a separate play: a single lyric, and that a very short lyric, is all that he devoted to immortalizing her memory.’ But suppose I show that the Aeschylean poetry, so much at least as envious time has left to us, was largely devoted to that very subject with which these critics declare he was wholly unconcerned?

Suppose I show that this very disciple of Mars has essayed the praises of noble women with such zeal that we unhesitatingly feel him to have shared with Aristotle the belief : ' All states among whom the regulations regarding women are bad enjoy scarcely the half of happiness.'¹

I pass over the female characters who appear in the plays which we have already set forth and discussed—Cassandra, 350 Atossa, Electra : but let us see whether in our quest we may not find quite sufficient for our contention in Io and her offspring, such as Aeschylus has painted them, partly in the *Prometheus Bound*, and still more at large in that tenderest, sweetest of his plays, *The Suppliants*. For certainly no one who attentively considers the two plays can have much doubt that, when the author was preparing *The Suppliants*, he had in mind his previous work : and was not without a certain delight, as is only natural, that he was re-treading a path familiar to him long before. It is still more important to notice that it is not only the story but also the moral tone and the theology of the *Prometheus*, so far as these are concerned with Io, that are fully developed in *The Suppliants*. For I cannot be wrong in thinking that in the earlier play Io's fortunes were intended to illustrate clearly the Virgilian creed as to the wretchedness and feebleness of mankind (' the doubtful doom of human kind '). This was the real lesson taught by the protagonist, Prometheus himself, undergoing torments because of his undue love and sympathy for the race of man : and the same view of the conditions of our life is inculcated by Io : she teaches us that in some way or other a sort of Nemesis hangs over men who are overbold 442 in aspiration : whether, like Prometheus, they devise methods and expedients for alleviation of common ills : or, as Io, indulge in building castles in the air, which is the way with most of us in the ignorance of our early years.

¹ *Rhet.* i. 5. 6 (Oxford Translation, p. 32).

Thus, in a sense, a double field of misfortunes presents itself—the main theme of Tragedy.

The hard-heartedness of Heaven seems to afflict, beyond all others, two types of mortals ; on the one hand, those of brilliant natural gifts, of manly force of character, with high ambitious dreams : on the other, those in the first flush of sanguine youth, of feminine spirit, with quieter aspirations. Of Prometheus we have already spoken, whom the poet intends as the type of disappointment in the sphere of speculation and of political life. Now we turn to consider Io, our aim being first to define what we may call the governing motive of her character, and in the next place to show the careful piety of Aeschylus, who softens and explains in her case, as previously in that of Prometheus, any reproach to the Supreme God which may perchance have sounded over harsh and revolting.

Now there is one speech which will best explain the wandering maiden's real character, that which she herself delivers in presence of the chorus of nymphs, when relating the origin of her exile :

For nightly visions, coming evermore
 Into my virgin bower, sought to woo me
 With glozing words. 'O virgin greatly blest,
 Why art thou still a virgin, when thou might'st
 Attain to highest wedlock? For with dart
 Of passion for thee Zeus doth glow, and fain
 Would make thee his. And thou, O child, spurn not
 The bed of Zeus, but go to Lerna's field,
 Where feed thy father's flocks and herds,
 That so the eye of Zeus may find repose
 From this his craving.' With such visions I
 Was haunted every evening.¹

443 Will any one contradict me if I say that the life-stories of hundreds of young men and women run on much the same lines as these ? At that age most of us are wont to be

¹ *Prom.* 645 (Plumptre).

filled with hope and desire for a career too great and splendid for the limitations of human nature, much more of our own mediocrity.

Aeschylus pictures her as having been allured to the Lernaean fields and the pastures and sheepfolds of her father Inachus : and I certainly incline to suppose that he intended to mark herein an experience most trying to the troubled minds of youth : namely, that this unrest finds its way, in strange fashion, amid those very scenes which are in especial familiar and beloved, whether owing to the old associations of childhood or to the recollection of those near and dear to them.

But note how deeply these broodings take seat in the innermost hearts of the unhappy sufferers. Io herself, for instance, after long lapse of time, tortured and wellnigh overcome by wanderings to and fro, comes to consult the oracle of Jove at Dodona :

And the shrine
Oracular of Jove Thesprotian,
And the strange portent of the talking oaks,
By which—

(so the poet admonishes her)

By which full clearly, not in riddle dark,
Thou wast addressed as noble spouse of Zeus—
*If aught of pleasure such things give to thee.*¹

Assuredly it is a strange truth which is here, in half a line, touched so briefly and searchingly : in a way these unhappy beings delight in their wretchedness. They have come to realize that their hopes were blind and vain : yet they cannot easily put them aside, and eagerly grasp at their dying embers caught sight of once again after long years.

I now pass to consider the nature of the penance—twofold 444 in quality—which the unfortunate victim of rash ambition

¹ *Prom.* 829 (Plumptre).

had to undergo. First, tormented by a gadfly, she is driven here and there, over sea and land, with no relief from her frenzy, without a moment's rest. By this I suppose Aeschylus intends to impress on us how violent are the apprehensions, the longings, and the misery which agitate those who are once carried in mind and desire beyond what is lawful. This wandering unrest much resembles madness in many ways, and especially in this, that men plainly perceive whither they are borne and what the issue will be: and yet by a sort of fate are hurried along without power of self-control. And this is the reason why, not to another speaker, but to the overwrought maiden herself, are assigned those glowing lines in which insanity is described:

The throbbing pain inflames me, and the mood
Of frenzy-smitten rage;
The gadfly's pointed sting,
Not forged with fire, attacks,
And my heart beats against my breast with fear.
Mine eyes whirl round and round:
Out of my course I'm borne
By the wild spirit of fierce agony,
And cannot curb my lips,
And turbid speech at random dashes on
Upon the waves of dread calamity.¹

Who that has observed the words and expressions of the insane, has not noted with surprise that, though governed by no sure law, they are yet confined within limits of their own, and never range far away from the source of their malady, whatever it was? The more wretched and revolting, therefore, is the lot of those who, like Io, are borne hither and thither, by gloomy anxieties and agonies, just in the manner of madmen.

Again, how terrible is the strain in which the unhappy maiden prays that she may be freed from that spectre of the

¹ *Prom.* 877 (Plumptre).

earth-born Argos, which is the second half of the punish- 445
ment divinely visited on her :

Spectre of Argos, thou, the earth-born one—
Ah, keep him off, O Earth !
I fear to look upon that herdsman dread,
Him with ten thousand eyes ;
Ah lo ! he cometh with his crafty look,
Whom Earth refuses even dead to hold ;
But coming from beneath
He hunts me miserable,
And drives me famished o'er the sea-beach sand.¹

Once carried away by blind passion beyond due bound she deliriously fancies that keen eyes, which she may not escape, are ever haunting her : the mere indulgence of undisciplined thoughts is now a sorrow, nay a source of shame to her ; she feels shame in the presence of God and men alike : nay even in the presence of the familiar spots, as if they too were conscious of her offence or of her madness. And thus, on this ground too, it is probable that Aeschylus designedly attributes to the maiden such a character as brings vividly before us the experiences of youth, bashful indeed and open-hearted, but over impulsive and bent on hopeless aims.

But, lest it may be suspected that I am making too much of mere fancies of my own, let me remind you that much the same view commended itself to a critic so sober and competent as Horace. In recommending that common tradition should as a rule be followed, as regards the characteristic qualities of those presented on the stage, he quotes among other instances this very Io, whom he describes as ' a wanderer ' :

Still be Medea all revenge and scorn,
Ino still sad, Ixion still forsworn,
Io a wanderer still, Orestes still forlorn.²

¹ *Prom.* 570 (Plumptre).

² *Hor. De Art. Poet.*, 123 (Conington).

‘ Let Io ’, he says, ‘ be a wanderer.’ But why insist on that ? As her whole story consists only of her wanderings, if Io 446 appears at all, obviously she cannot but be ‘ a wanderer ’. Horace, however, I imagine, understood by ‘ wandering ’ not so much her journeyings from place to place, as her general type of character and outlook on life : otherwise the mention of her in his poem would not well accord with the other characters we have just quoted : one of whom is treacherous, another sad, a third revengeful and scornful—all named after their disposition and not their fate in life. Besides, since no tragedian, so far as I am aware, except Aeschylus has commemorated the daughter of Inachus, I can hardly doubt that it was his *Prometheus* Horace had in mind, when he laid down this rule. Why, therefore, relying on so high an authority, may we not confidently assert that this wandering maiden may have been intended by Aeschylus as a type and instance of the pass to which young men and women arrive, whose minds are fired with ambition for that which lies beyond their reach and which is denied to them ?

Not that I consider any reproach for shameful conduct should attach to the unhappy maiden. Indeed, I note, scattered among her various utterances, no ambiguous proofs of true womanly modesty. In the first place, it is only most reluctantly, even to the most sympathetic hearers, that she pours forth the tale of her woes :

And yet I blush to tell
The storm that came from God, and brought the loss
Of maiden peace, what way it seized on me.¹

Yet, in her story, when told, there is not the least trace of anything shameful : it is merely that her mind shrinks from utterance, by reason of some religious instinct making her sensitive to men’s eyes and God’s light.

¹ *Prom.* 643 (Plumptre).

And next, when she recounts the course of that ill-omened passion, or I may rather say vision, she tells us that, with a modesty becoming a religious and modest girl, she concealed nothing from her father :

With such visions I
Was haunted every evening, till I dared
To tell my father all these dreams of night.¹

And it accords, too, with a sense of religious awe, that in bewailing her mad passion she does not so much resent her 447 bitter griefs as hold it a disgraceful thing that she is so uncontrolled of tongue, and is borne weakly and at random along a torrent of disordered words :

And turbid speech at random dashes on
Upon the waves of dread calamity.²

It may, perhaps, be instructive to compare her maiden bewailings with the indignant menaces thrown forth by Prometheus :

For what offence, O son of Cronos, what,
Hast thou thus bound me fast
In these great miseries ?³

That she has sinned grievously, she has not the least doubt : all she asks is to be made acquainted with the quality of her fault. Thus she proceeds :

Burn me with fire, or bury me in earth,
Or to wild sea-beasts give me as a prey :
Nay, grudge me not, O King,
An answer to my prayers.⁴

Observe how she resigns herself to the Superior Powers even in the form of her punishment ; all she eagerly begs is that it may be such as will reach some end, and that she may not have to rove through infinite time over the whole

¹ *Prom.* 656 (Plumptre).

² *Prom.* 884 (Plumptre).

³ *Prom.* 579 (Plumptre).

⁴ *Ibid.*

earth. Thus she tends in a totally different direction from that stubborn and unyielding Titan: and we may not be far wrong in believing that Aeschylus is putting before us two types—in her the type of womanly patience, in him that of masculine and indomitable courage.

Much of the same significance are the traits exhibited in her ready confidence in Prometheus when once she recognizes him, and in the fact that in the midst of her own terror and torment she feels pity that such as he should have to endure such terrible suffering. At first, indeed, when she hears the name of her father Inachus,

Surely I heard the maid by gadfly driven,
Daughter of Inachus,¹

448 she is filled with amazement, but hardly yields complete trust:

Who art thou, who, poor wretch,
Who thus so truly nam'st me miserable?

But thou, make clear to me
What yet for me remains,
What remedy, what healing for my pangs,
Show me, if thou dost know.²

Afterwards, however, on Prometheus merely declaring his name, she instantly places full trust in him. Moreover, filled with compassion, she desires first of all to be told the story of his adversities before being enlightened as to the limits of her own wanderings:

O thou to men as benefactor known,
Why, poor Prometheus, sufferest thou this pain?³

In both cases she shows a maidenly simplicity.

These are the reasons which lead me to infer that the part played by Io was deliberately assigned with especial

¹ *Prom.* 591 (Plumptre).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Prom.* 614 (Plumptre).

intent to make clear the unhappiness of those, either still young or with youthful mind, who allow themselves to be possessed by some far-off and deluding ambition. And thence it follows that her fate and fortunes, perhaps, also serve to declare to us the discipline of the gods, whereby extravagant desires are wont to be restrained. Such men or women grow weary soon of their interminable wandering, and are ashamed to meet the gaze of onlookers, whether gods or men. But yet they wander, disturbed and anxious, till the healing hand of divine power is extended, dispelling the deep-rooted malady by simple touch. Of this there is very significant indication towards the close of the play, where Io, or we may perhaps rather call her Isis, is led on to this end, by devious road, till she reaches the fatal spot—sacred indeed as being situate on the Egyptian coast, once a holy region—where she is bid wait for the advent of Jove:

A city stands,
Canôbos, at its country's furthest bound,
Hard by the mouth and silt-bank of the Nile:
There Zeus shall give thee back thy mind again.

And note, pray, the method of her cure :

449

With hand that works no terror touching thee.¹

What other import can these lines have, but to warn mankind that by no means other than a holy and chastened love, whether of the gods or men, can unbridled passion and the unrest of youthful minds be soothed and quieted? But the seer with happiest forecast thus proceeds :

Touch only—and thou then shalt bear a child
Of Zeus begotten, Epaphos, 'Touch-born,'
Swarthy of hue, whose lot shall be to reap
The whole plain watered by the broad-streamed Neilos.²

It is sufficiently clear, I think, that the origin assigned to this Epaphos is far other than such as was commonly

¹ *Prom.* 845 (Plumptre).

² *Prom.* 850 (Plumptre).

given to those whom the impious piety of the ancients acclaimed as sons and daughters to highest Jove: since he owes his birth, as we have said, simply to the touch and breath of the divine lips. And the frequent reference to this miracle, which we find in *The Suppliants*, testifies how greatly Aeschylus delighted in it. The Chorus there invoke their hero ancestor:

Child of the heifer-foundress of our line,
Who cropped the flowery mead,
Born of the breath and named from touch of Zeus.¹

And they add that when the fated time, or as Pindar calls it, 'the appointed month,'² had completed its course, it proved by the happy issue the power of the divine touch:

And lo! the destined time
Wrought fully with the name,
And she brought forth the 'Touch-born' Epaphos.

—an extraordinary testimony to the power of a pure and duly restrained love. In no obscure phrase the Chorus declares the same story, as it had been handed down:

Zeus with his touch an offspring then begets.³

But far the most beautiful are the lines which the Chorus, 450 again, afterwards interweave in their supplications, besieging Jove, as the way was, with reminders of his ancient kindness to their race. 'Remember it,' they pray, 'O Thou who did'st on Io lay thy mystic touch.'⁴ And lest there may be doubt of their looking upon Epaphos' birth in the light of a prodigy, they add, first having told the story of the maiden's banishment:

Who was it then that soothed
Poor Io, wandering in her sore affright,
Driven on, and ever on, by gadfly's maddening sting?
Zeus, Lord of endless time

¹ *Suppl.* 43 (Plumptre).

² *Ol.* vi. 52.

³ *Suppl.* 318 (312) (Plumptre).

⁴ *Suppl.* (544) 535 (Plumptre).

Was seen All-working then ;
 He, even he, for by his sovereign might
 That works no ill, was she from evil freed ;
 And by his breath divine
 She findeth rest, and weeps in floods of tears
 Her sorrowing shame away.¹

That common feature associated with mental disorder, the drying up of the fount of tears, is beautifully touched upon ; when, therefore, it again bursts forth, we have an assurance of the return of the mind to its normal self. But to proceed with Io :

And with new burden big,
 Not falsely ' Zeus-born ' named,

(Prometheus' prophecy being thus fulfilled)

She bare a son that grew in faultless growth.

I would have this story carefully compared with the same Jove as presented to us by Io herself in the *Prometheus Bound* and the description of his relentless expulsion of the wretched maiden from her father's home. Without doubt, on comparison, we shall find reason to believe that, when writing *The Suppliants*, Aeschylus felt some scruples as to what he had before written, too boldly and freely, concerning so mighty a deity. And thus, perhaps, what we have before suggested with regard both to the *Prometheus Unbound* and the praises of Jove, carefully and frequently repeated in the Agamemnonian trilogy, may seem the more likely to be well founded.

But I am afraid that too much time has been spent on this, which is, after all, only a kind of prelude to *The Suppliants*. Let us proceed, now, to the play itself, which, 451 undoubtedly, of all the extant plays of Aeschylus, touches most directly on the concerns and interests of women. Perhaps we shall not be far wrong, if we consider *The Suppliants* related to that part of the *Prometheus* which

¹ *Suppl.* 580 (571) (Plumptre).

sc 1.3
cf 1.4

concerns Io and her fortunes, much in the same manner as the first portion of a trilogy has its complement in the second or in the final play. I quite agree, indeed, with a most learned critic¹ that there are by no means doubtful signs in *The Suppliants* of its being an incomplete work : especially at the end, where we have the two so-called semi-choruses at variance between themselves : yet I can hardly go so far as to conclude, as he does, that it is the second, not the first, of the three plays which has survived to us. For if we recall such remains as we have of the fabled story of the house of Danaus, the opinion will perhaps be more probable which makes *The Suppliants* the first of the series : while next to them would follow the slaughter of the husbands, just like the terrible matricide in the *Choephoraë* : while in the third play the curtain would fall upon the terrible exaction of penalties both from the father, Danaus, and the fifty daughters, taking place partly on the earth, but chiefly in the shades below. That would, indeed, be a terrific scene, with the dread goddesses revelling in it, one well worthy of Aeschylus with his rush of thought and glowing phrase. As it is, since untoward fate has decreed that we can enjoy no more than a very small part of the whole splendid work, and that part itself mutilated, it is inevitable that we manifestly miss, to a great extent, the full significance of the poem : but traces of the story as formerly received, if they chance to be met with, will, on that account, be so much the more acceptable : nor is there any reason why we should not avail ourselves of both sources to work out some connected thread if we can : whereby it may be shown that Aeschylus followed these
452 traditions as regards both the overruling prudence of Heaven and the ways and dispositions of women.

I say the ways and dispositions of women, not of this or that particular woman : for it seems a special mark of

¹ Muller, *Eumenides*, p. 237, English Translation.

this tragedy, as we have previously indicated, that the author intended in it to set before us certain universal types rather than individual distinctions of character. We see that very few proper names appear in it : neither the Argive king nor the Egyptian priest has a particular name : nor has any one of the fifty maidens a conspicuous and characteristic part assigned to her. Some will, perhaps, find fault, and perhaps rightly, with this simplicity, and compare it with the ostentatious poverty of a rich man, but, while I fully allow that, hereby, the sharp outline of the whole play is blunted, and there are no distinct varieties and hues to correspond to the facts of real life, yet we derive thus much of advantage from this very defect, that it is exactly this method which puts us into possession of the point of view of the great poet on the subject we treat to-day : I mean the essential disposition and characteristics of women. For since he has not given us a portrait of Hypermenestra or of any other of the maidens, what else could Aeschylus have intended, I would ask, than to depict the general character of womankind, and to show what feelings would naturally influence women in such a crisis. The mere story itself, I submit, was bound to bring out his opinion, whatever that may have been, regarding the whole world of women. And now observe what are the chief colours which he has used in drawing his picture.

First of all, he always notes one trait, itself the most characteristic of a true maiden's modesty : his suppliants not only shun and shrink from their insolent suitors, the sons of Danaus, but also, because of their conduct, avoid all companionship and even the very gaze of men. This seems 453 implied in their prayers, couched more than once in such form as this :

May He, the all-seeing Father, grant that I,
Great seed of Mother dread,

In time may 'scape, still maiden undefiled,
My suitor's marriage-bed.¹

And again they pray :

Ah ! may I ne'er be captive to the might
Of males !²

They speak, not of this or that particular man, but of the whole race of men. Moreover, they often set men and women over against each other, as they might two opposing parties in a state : for example :

Drive thou far off the wantonness of men,
The pride thou hatest sore,
And in the pool of darkling purple hue
Plunge thou the woe that comes in swarthy barque.
Look on the women's cause ;
Recall the ancient tale
Of one whom Thou did'st love in time of old,
The mother of our race.³

When admitted to citizenship, they thus sing the praises of the Argives :

For they have mercy shown ;
And passed their kind decree,
Pitying this piteous flock, the suppliants of great Zeus.
They did not take their stand with men 'gainst women,
Casting dishonour on their plea for help.⁴

Finally, in a solemn prayer at the very commencement of the poem, they use the phrase ' a swarm of men ' as a term of bitter reproach :

And that swarm of men that follow,
Haughty offspring of Ægyptos,
Ere they set their foot among you
On this silt-strown shore,—oh send them
Seaward in their ship swift-rowing.⁵

¹ *Suppl.* 145 (139) (Plumptre).

² *Suppl.* 397 (392) (Plumptre).

³ *Suppl.* 537 (528) (Plumptre).

⁴ *Suppl.* 647 (637) (Plumptre).

⁵ *Suppl.* 30 (Plumptre).

Clearly, these maidens belong to the ranks of those who, both rightfully and willingly, are wont to appeal chiefly 454 for aid to the virgin goddesses, and this is what we find in their prayers.

At one time they approach Minerva with their petition :

Thou, virgin daughter of high Jove,
A virgin's vows hear and approve ;
Holding thy sober, awful state,
Protect us from the touch we hate :
From bold incontinence secure,
Pure thyself, preserve us pure.¹

At another they seek the protection of Diana :

And Artemis the chaste,
May she behold our band
With pity : ne'er be marriage rites enforced
On us by Kythereia.²

But above all they honour their father Danaus : they cherish his every word : they cannot bear to be away from him :

I fain would take my seat not far from thee.³

Leave me not here alone, I pray thee, father !⁴

Even when in sore peril, they will not suffer themselves to be conducted to any shelter save under their father's advice :

But kindly send to us
Our father Danaus, brave and true of heart,
To counsel and direct.
His must the first decision be where we
Should dwell, and where to find
A kindly home.⁵

And observe also how, touched with religious reverence,

¹ *Suppl.* 150 (144) (Potter).

² *Suppl.* 1038 (1031) (Plumptre).

³ *Suppl.* 208 (Plumptre).

⁴ *Suppl.* 756 (748) (Plumptre).

⁵ *Suppl.* 975 (968) (Plumptre).

they shrink from remembering, or, at all events, from speaking of the story told them by their parents, of the fate and fortune of their mother 'the Wanderer':

They tell of one who bore the temple-keys
Of Hera, Io, in this Argive land.
So was 't indeed, and wide the fame prevails.¹

You can feel that a reverent modesty checks them from saying more.

Thus much of feminine modesty: it remains to add a few remarks as to their love and religious feeling for particular places. With indescribable charm these exiles combine a strange yearning for their native land with a reverent and grateful feeling, not merely towards their Argive hosts, but even towards their shores and hills, their rivers, and the whole Argive region. They are conscious of the attraction of the land of their ancestors: but, in spite of it, they still long with tenderest regret for their own Egyptian land. In a set chorus they resound its praises:

And so she cometh, as that herdsman winged
Pierces with sharpest sting,
To holy plain all forms of life sustaining,
Fields that are fed from snows,
Which Typhon's monstrous strength has traversèd,
And unto Neilos' streams,
By sickly taint untouched.²

But still stronger evidence, I think, is afforded of their love of native land, by chance references dropped from time to time in songs which deal with quite other themes. For instance: they liken themselves to some nightingale, bewailing, not her rifled nest, but her loved rivers and forests, from which the hawk has banished her:

¹ *Suppl.* 299 (291) (Plumptre).

² *Suppl.* 565 (555) (Plumptre).

For she, driven back from wonted haunts and streams,
Mourns with a strange new plaint
The home that she has lost.¹

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Apparently they call it a 'new plaint', since to her old lament for Itys is added now a new lament for banishment from her home and haunts. I can fancy, too, that Aeschylus had in mind the ways and disposition of that tireless songster, weaving a new strain almost from hour to hour. And note with what charming skill the poet works up the 'answering clause' of the comparison :

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E'en so do I, to wailing all o'er-given,
In plaintive music of Ionian mood,
Vex the soft cheek on Neilos' banks that bloomed,
And heart that bursts in tears,
And pluck the flowers of lamentations loud,
Not without fear of friends,
Lest none should care to help
This flight of mine from that mist-shrouded shore.²

456

The measure is described as 'Ionian mood', being unfamiliar and thoroughly novel to them as foreigners, and so fitly answering to that 'strange new plaint'. The 'soft cheek on Neilos' bank that bloomed' is beautifully associated with the memories of peaceful youth. Many suggestions have been made to explain the epithet 'mist-shrouded' as applied to Egypt, but I shall only mention one, which is recommended by its very simplicity. 'Mist-shrouded,' says one of the old Greek commentators, 'because lying low and, to those approaching from the sea, seeming as if underground.' Navigators, I imagine, applied this epithet to Egypt, having seen its shores from afar, shrouded, as is generally the case, in a vague appearance of haze. Why, therefore, should not the poet have imagined this word to occur to the Suppliants, seeing once more with their mind's eye their country's coast receding from sight and

¹ *Suppl.* 65 (63) (Plumptre).

² *Suppl.* 71 (69) (Plumptre).

now barely visible, now not visible at all, above the waves ? If to any one these speculations seem trivial or over-subtle, let him remember that a poem is like a picture in which the whole effect is not seldom produced by the most delicate stroke of the brush.

But I said that with their affection for the old country there was strikingly combined a certain confidence and trust in the Argive State: indeed, even in the very localities, the hills, rivers, and, before all, in the temples of the Argive Gods :

And to what land more propitious
 Could we come than this before us,
 Holding in our hand the branches
 Suppliant, wreathed with white wool fillets ?
 O State ! O land ! O water gleaming !
 Ye the high Gods, ye the awful,
 In the dark the graves still guarding ;
 Thou too with them, Zeus Preserver,
 Guardian of the just man's dwelling,
 Welcome with the breath of pity,
 Pity as from these shores wafted,
 Us poor women who are suppliants.¹

457 And they congratulate themselves a little later upon the conditions under which their petitions are poured forth :

And now invoking him in grassy fields,
 Where erst his mother strayed.²

They hold it of good omen, that a secure refuge is allowed them in the very region where long ago their great ancestor passed her youth, innocent and free from cares :

We boast that we are come
 Of consecrated land the habitants,
 And from this land by lineage high descended.
 Now to the ancient track,
 Our mother's, I have passed
 The flowery meadow-land where she was watched,—

¹ *Suppl.* (20 Plumpetre).

² *Suppl.* 51 (Plumpetre).

The pastures of the herd,
 Whence Io, by the stinging gadfly driven,
 Flees, of her sense bereft,
 Passing through many tribes of mortal men.¹

In short, either they associate both regions in friendliest unison in a single appeal, or, if yielding Argos pre-eminence, they take pains to show that they remember with no ordinary affection their own old Egyptian home :

Let praise attend this city of Pelasgos ;
 Let us no more, no more adore the mouths of Neilos
 With these our hymns of praise ;
 Nay, but the rivers here that pour calm streams
 through our country,
 Parents of many a son, making glad the soil of our
 meadows,
 With wide flood rolling on, in full and abounding
 richness.²

I am not certain that I ought not to attribute to the same cause, I mean to a true womanly instinct, the kindness which the Suppliants show to dumb, unreasoning animals. No doubt (as I have before suggested) the Pythagorean training of Aeschylus had great influence in this direction. But let us see whether it was not intentionally that the author placed in the mouths of this chorus of women such indications of the feeling as appear in this tragedy : perhaps he thought that otherwise there would be something lacking on their part in true and tender sympathy.

This explains those lovely lines, already cited by us no great way back, in which, on the one hand, the maidens picture to themselves a nightingale barred from her familiar groves, and on the other, a calf wandering on the 458 rocks plaintively lowing to attract its keeper :

She lifteth up her voice
 And to the shepherd tells her tale of grief.³

¹ *Suppl.* 545 (536) (Plumptre). ² *Suppl.* 1030 (1023) (Plumptre).

³ *Suppl.* 356 (351) (Plumptre).

See with what skill there is combined with Io's story pity for a heifer stung by a gadfly : one and the same chorus seems to hymn at once a dirge both for men and dumb animals ; this is like the thought of the inspired Psalmist, 'Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast.'¹ But it is enough to have glanced in passing at these details, merely to let it be seen how they affect the feminine disposition as conceived by Aeschylus. For it is a well-known and accepted fact that, as a rule, women have kindlier feelings than men towards dumb animals.

Very significant, too, is the delicate grace which makes them crave indulgence for their foreign tongue even when praying to gods of an alien land :

Thee, Apian sea-girt bluff,
I greet (our alien speech
Thou knowest well, O land).²

And this most beautiful trait of reserve :

Therefore from faces by our boughs o'ershadowed
Let prayers ascend in emulous eagerness.³

Was it possible to have expressed more fittingly the true combination of modest reverence with that confidence in prayer which should be seen in all religious observance and ceremonial, especially on the part of women ? Again, what singular simplicity they exhibit, when speaking of the perils of ocean and their own troubles :

The oar indeed and dwelling, timber-wrought,
With sails of canvas, 'gainst the salt sea proof,
Brought me with favouring gales,
By stormy wind unvexed :
Nor have I cause for murmur.⁴

So, too, when they invoke a sea-storm for their enemies :

¹ Psalm xxxvi. 7 (P.B.).

² *Suppl.* 123 (127) (Plumptre).

³ *Suppl.* 664 (656) (Plumptre).

⁴ *Suppl.* 140 (134) (Plumptre).

Oh, send them,
 Seaward in their ship swift-rowing ;
 There, with whirlwind tempest-driven,
 There, with lightning and with thunder,
 There, with beasts that bring the storm-rain,
 May they in the fierce sea perish.¹

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In each case their words are such as are natural to maidens having but once had experience of a sea voyage. Nor must we omit to notice the fact, trivial as it may seem, that, in the midst of all their griefs, they bethink themselves of their garments, wretchedly torn and rent, in the customary manner of those in trouble :

And oft-times fall, with rendings passionate,
 On robe of linen and Sidonian veil.²

And certainly their trembling fears, on first hearing the announcement of the approach of the ship of Ægyptus, and the hesitating suspicion which for some time leads them to shrink from Pelasgus, in spite of his kindly welcome, are all such traits as would at once suggest themselves to any artist imagining the part to be played by young women.

A more subtle trait it is that when their father has taught them to which of the gods they should specially make appeal, they add to each petition some special plea, likely to touch the heart of each deity. For instance, this is how they address Apollo :

We call the sun's bright rays to succour us,
 Apollo too, the holy, in that He
 A God has tasted exile from high heaven ;
 Knowing that fate, He well may feel for men.³

They style him ' holy ', to win his sympathy for a band of maidens : they remind him of his own exile to win his sympathy for exiles. Then, turning to Neptune they say :

Well hath He brought us, well may He receive !⁴

¹ *Suppl.* 33 (Plumptre).

² *Suppl.* 126 (131) (Plumptre).

³ *Suppl.* 221 (213) (Plumptre).

⁴ *Suppl.* 219 (Plumptre).

—pressing past favours as security for those they desire. Thirdly, there is Mercury : they desire this herald to be mindful of his due office ; mainly because they themselves are freeborn, and worthy of his speedy help :

To us, as free, let him good herald prove.¹

What is the purport of these minute refinements ? Well, 460 to me, at all events, these adroit expedients of the suppliant women are eminently suited to their characters : indeed, I will make a bolder confession ; they seem to me akin to the spirit of that woman who, when the Lord refused for a while to grant her prayer, reverently yet shrewdly answered : ‘ Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table,’ and who, in consequence, earned a meed of praise from His own lips.²

Any one may justifiably conclude from this array of instances, such as it is, that Aeschylus by no means undervalued the softer affections, as they are called, or the domestic interests and general ways of women. But, to make doubly sure, he himself declares in the person of Danaus what control of speech, what modesty in their whole conduct of life, they must exhibit who would be held to merit the high title of virgin :

And with your speech, let mood not over-bold,
Nor vain nor wanton, shine from modest brow
And calm clear eye : and be not prompt to speak,
Nor full of words.³

And again :

But ye, I charge you, see ye shame me not,
With this your life’s bloom drawing all men’s eyes.
The goodly vintage is full hard to watch ;
All men and beasts make fearful havoc of it,
Nay, birds that fly, and creeping things of earth ;
And Kypris offers fruitage, dropping ripe,

¹ *Suppl.* 221 (Plumptre).

² Matt. xv. 27.

³ *Suppl.* 205 (197) (Plumptre).

As prey to wandering lust, nor lets it stay ;
 And on the goodly comeliness of maidens
 Each passer-by, o'ercome with hot desire,
 Darts forth the amorous arrows of the eye.¹

Only, I charge you, keep your father's precepts,
 Prizing as more than life your chastity.²

He who thus wisely and weightily discoursed on the duties of women, certainly held also that their fortunes deserved in a special degree the overruling protection of the Supreme Power. Hence that same Jupiter, who in the *Prometheus* ⁴⁶¹ had decreed that Io should be disciplined by wretched wanderings, though always holding out hope that the wanderer should at last recover both settled mind and settled home ; that same Jupiter, I repeat, is ever at hand to support these suppliant maidens, the descendants of Io : to him they appeal in their need ; he it is whom they assume to preside over the circle of deities who protect Argos ; and while making distinction of two orders of deity, as it were, namely those above and those below, they yet, in striking fashion, place Jove separate and apart from both, as being superior, not only in degree but in kind : for these words show their belief :

Ye the high Gods, ye the awful,
 In the dark the graves still guarding ;
 Thou too with them, Zeus Preserver.³

They hail him too, as the one last support of pious homes :

Guardian of the just man's dwelling.⁴

Moreover, Danaus asseverates that, slowly but surely, as the phrase goes, Jupiter both chastises ill-doers and justifies and delivers his own worshippers. So men must ever wait for his own time ; they must not be hasty and

¹ *Suppl.* 1003 (996) (Plumptre).

² *Suppl.* 1012 (Plumptre).

³ *Suppl.* 25 (Plumptre).

⁴ *Suppl.* 27 (Plumptre).

impatient, remembering the darkness that hangs over human life :

Take courage then ;
In their own time and at the appointed day,
Whoever slights the Gods shall pay for it.¹

Again we read :

Nor have I cause for murmur. Issues good
May He, the all-seeing Father, grant.²

Furthermore, Jove's decrees are brought to pass in ways absolutely unfailing, but mysterious beyond comparison : one might fairly say that the divine counsels resemble some wood, clad with boughs in densest profusion, whose paths are impenetrable to keenest insight, and rarely lead to the
462 region under heaven towards which they seem to make at first :

And yet the will of Zeus is hard to scan :
Through all it brightly gleams,
E'en though in darkness and the gloom of chance
For us poor mortals wrapt.
Safe, by no fall tripped up,
The full-wrought deed decreed by brow of Zeus ;
For dark with shadows stretch
The pathways of the counsels of his heart
And difficult to see.³

And it is further added, that the thunderbolts of the Supreme Ruler flash forth most readily and willingly against the proud and violent : that none sin with impunity, not even those who after a space come to their senses and divest themselves of their violent arms :

And from high-towering hopes He hurleth down
To utter doom the heir of mortal birth ;
Yet sets He in array
No forces violent ;
All that Gods work is effortless and calm.⁴

¹ *Suppl.* 740 (732) (Plumptre).

² *Suppl.* 143 (136) (Plumptre).

³ *Suppl.* 90 (86) (Plumptre).

⁴ *Suppl.* 101 (95) (Plumptre).

Finally, rewards and punishments are not to be attributed to secondary causes, as they are termed : Jove himself, seated on his holiest throne, works the effect, I will not even say by the mere glance of his eye, but by the silent power of his spirit :

Seated on holiest throne,
Thence, though we know not how,
He works His perfect will.¹

But, it may be objected, the maidens by no means invoke the decree of Jove as the end of strife : seeing that in one chorus they threaten to seek, perhaps at the hands of the gods below, the equity denied them by the neglect of the gods above :

But if this may not be,
We, of swarth sun-burnt race,
Will with our suppliant branches go to him,
Zeus, sovereign of the dead,
The Lord that welcomes all that come to him, 463
Dying by twisted noose
If we the grace of Gods Olympian miss.²

But I incline to look on this as a mere formal phrase intended to press Jove with more strenuous appeal : it is like the assertion which we find at times in Holy Scripture, where the prophets in appealing to the true God declare that they are willing to sacrifice their own lives if only they may secure the salvation of their people, which is bound up with His own glory.³ At all events, the lines delivered in the very next strophe by the Suppliants would seem to imply this construction :

And then shall Zeus to words
Unseemly be exposed,
Having the heifer's offspring put to shame,

¹ *Suppl.* 106 (100) (Plumptre). ² *Suppl.* 160 (154) (Plumptre).

³ Exod. xxxii. 12 ; Num. xiv. 13 ; Joshua vii. 9 ; Rom. ix. 3.

Whom he himself begat,
 And now his face averting from our prayers :
 Ah, may he hear on high,
 Yea, pitying look and hear propitiously !¹

They imply clearly, as we have seen already, from the language assigned to Apollo in the *Eumenides*,² that laws exist which, in some sort, control even deity itself—the immovable and eternal principles of equity and goodness : and that they who plead these in prayer to Jove, though in word indeed they seem to appeal against him, are really by their very appeal falling back upon his protection : seeing that these very laws and principles but express his highest and most absolute will.

And thus in the case of these Suppliants, as fully as in the *Prometheus*, Aeschylus maintained his true piety inviolate and intact. He assigns to Supreme Deity an oversight in the domestic life and fortunes of women not a whit less watchful than that previously claimed for him in the concerns of civil life and the learning of philosophers.

But had not the inroads of time denied us the enjoyment
 464 of those plays with which it is probable that Aeschylus completed the trilogy, I apprehend we should possess evidence—splendid, assuredly, but at the same time most mournful—of the gradual stages whereby the character and quality of woman is wont to decline, and to be changed by a kind of fate from the highest good to the utmost conceivable wickedness, when once it has entered on the downward path. And no one, I think, will deny that Aeschylus was specially fitted to deal with that terrible punishment which legend says was the climax of the story, when the scene passes to the world below and that well-known penalty :

Those maidens' guilt,
 Their famous doom, the ceaseless drain

¹ *Suppl.* 175 (168) (Plumptre).

² See *ante*, p. 55.

Of outpour'd water, ever spilt,
And all the pain
Reserved for sinners, even when dead.¹

For myself, I make no doubt that even here there would have been found that tone of deep piety which we have seen pervading, as with light of Elysium, all those writings of Aeschylus now remaining to us.

And though the great father of Tragedy has come down to us shorn of so great a part of his works, our age may yet be congratulated that from his meagre remains we derive so many memorials of pure religion: and I should account among these *The Suppliants* to hold almost the first place, were it for this alone—that the chief lesson which is taught by it is—that the most religious poet of ancient Greece also maintains and defends with utmost zeal the cause of chastity.

¹ Hor. *Odes*, iii. 11. 26 (Conington).

cf 106-7

288. 220

Pindar before Aeschylus p 265-
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What poets are to be distinctively classed as Lyrical. Two reasons given which make it difficult to classify them in due order. The reason why they generally adopt such involved and complicated metres. The essential principle of Pindar's Odes discussed: they are of the heroic class, and yet differ from the Homeric Epic and the Aeschylean drama. Examples are cited to establish that Pindar was inspired by a kind of passion where athletes and their games are concerned.

SOME may be of opinion, and not without a certain appearance of truth, that lyric poets may far more easily than others be distributed in class, each in his due order: I mean in accordance with that standard which we laid down at the outset as the true test of Poetry. For it is regarded as the special note of lyric poets that, when they write, they are not fettered by any hard-and-fast rule: they simply recount, or at least suggest, in appropriate song that which their 'wish, fear, rage, or delight' suggest at the moment.¹ One would suppose, therefore, that the special tastes and dispositions of such as thus write would stand forth revealed in clearest light. But that, in the instance of Pindar, as well as other lyric poets, the result has been quite the opposite, no one will deny who will read their works with a little care, and will not attempt to form his judgement on the whole from the perusal of only one or two poems. Unless I am mistaken, we shall often find ourselves faced with extremely difficult and
466 perplexed questions: first, whether they may in strict propriety be ranked among the poets whom I have before named 'primary'; and next, what is to be assigned as the peculiar and chief excellence of each—what is the inspired bent of Genius which possesses each?

¹ Juv. i. 85.

There are, indeed, very adequate causes which explain why it is that this uncertainty of which I am complaining arises chiefly with regard to Lyrical poetry, and some of these I will now set forth to the best of my power before proceeding to consider Pindar's Odes : which should of right and in due order be discussed at this particular stage, when we have now completed what was to be said concerning Homer and Aeschylus.

And, first of all, let me remind you that under the general description 'Lyrical' I am including all poems written as occasion arose to relieve the poet's mind without any connected story or train of thought. Let me be allowed to call all these Lyrics, even though they have an infinite variety of metre, of feeling, even of limit and scale. For whether their emotion is tranquil or impulsive, whether the style is terse or free and untrammelled, assuredly they all have this note in common, that they are trying to express the seething feelings of the soul by means of rhythmical language, drawing their inspiration from the circumstances of the moment, and not like Epic and Tragic or 'Didactic' poets, always carrying in their mind the scheme of a poem already outlined long ago.

As for the title 'Lyric' : we may fairly say, perhaps, that a writer of this quality seeks counsel from his lyre as circumstance and season demand : particularly since in this order of Poetry the method of metre and rhythm is of such prominent importance : nay, very frequently (as those having direct experience best know) the very flow and tenor of the thought will need to be arranged to suit them. It follows, therefore, that these writers may rightly be styled Lyrical on the same principle as those are styled 467 Dramatic, whose whole scheme essentially turns on some action or story : and those again Didactic, whose concern it is to inculcate the elements of some art or method. In a sense, indeed, all poets are lyrical : all others, however,

have certain rules peculiar to the quality of their special theme, and limits within which they must confine themselves: while there is nothing to hinder lyrical poets, properly so called, from roving at will whithersoever the strings of their lyre may lead them, or their own temperament guide them, or poetic inspiration and art urge them on.

And thus, as before remarked, where these lyrical poets are in question, two considerations in especial make it no easy task, even for trained and keen observers, to distinguish and adjudicate upon individual composers, and to decide in what class each should justly be placed. One of these difficulties results from the feelings and dispositions common to all humanity, the other from those peculiar to poets.

First, then, do we not all recognize that men vary from hour to hour, notably those apt to be carried away more powerfully than others, by enthusiastic feeling? Consequently those who venture to base their judgement only upon some two or three poems often find themselves at fault. We need to test and see whether at the time of composition the writer may not have been carried away, as often happens, by some unusual impulse of passion or sorrow, of admiration or keen regret. For when our souls are strongly moved (who does not know this by his own experience?) words and expressions repeatedly break forth quite alien to our normal and ordinary temper. And while these are absolutely sincere at the time, and are, indeed, most intimate to the nature of genuine Poetry, I venture to doubt whether any one would find them a true gauge by which to test the central feeling and true character of the speaker.

What guidance have we, should men's characteristic delights be inconstant and shift from day to day? how are we to proceed should some such instance present itself

like that Scottish ploughman, than whom no one in all literature has more happily and exquisitely sung in pastoral strain? Assuredly, never was man more unequal to himself than he was. Only compare those many songs of his, loosely flowing in reckless unrestraint, with that most beautiful poem¹ where he limns before us his own father, one like those 468

Rustic forefathers in days of yore,
Robust though frugal, and content though poor.²

See him preparing for his Sabbath with the family Bible at his side: what a glimpse we have not only of the peace of home but of deep piety! Will any one deny that the tone of these lines is not only charming and delightful, but even reverent and religious? Who does not lament and marvel too, that the man who wrote it could so rapidly have declined to sottish courses and indulged in ribald abuse, pleasures in which, if ever man did, he revelled keenly and eagerly?

Of a writer of such quality, therefore, we must conclude, that he is gifted to support the part, not of one, but of many poets: for he is clearly inspired in various poems, in absolutely opposed directions, and that with an equal strength of feeling which is never assumed or artificial: and, further, he has an equal command of rhythm and of diction for expressing feelings so conflicting. The question which suggests itself is, whether behind this extraordinary inconsistency there may not lie hidden some one constant vein of feeling, always guiding in one direction a mind which apart from this seems so inconsistent. And perhaps we may find something of the kind in the case of the poet just referred to, in his feeling for river and forest, the splendid pageant of sky and land which surrounds us: perhaps, I say, we may find that this passion was able,

¹ *The Cotter's Saturday Night*.

² *Hor. Ep.* ii. 1. 139 (Conington).

by its quiet, persistent strength, to hold together and give shape to his restless thoughts and cares.

This is but a slender thread to guide us, and I confess I could not trace it throughout his poems, yet, for all that, I am inclined to believe that no poet, indeed no human being, is without some master feeling which focuses and binds together into somewhat of a unity the fluctuating
469 and many varying distractions of the mind. At all events, meanwhile, we may lay it down as certain that the honour of the sacred style of poet must by no means be refused to any one merely by reason of his shifting feelings, provided that they are true and sincere at the time he writes. The essential requirement is that everything should flow from a full heart.

But here another difficult problem arises, which results from this very truth. Just as the common run of mankind is ever inconstant and fickle, so men more highly gifted have a strange power of adapting themselves, in very high degree, to every possible mode of feeling. What can possibly be so artificial (to follow Cicero's words¹) as measured verse, a stage, a play? Now while among all orders of poets there is frequently ample room for doubt, whether a poem is a real utterance of true feeling or a merely artistic effort, no man of penetration, I think, would deny that this doubt is peculiarly and specially felt as regards lyrical poets. It is far more easy to pretend to feel a strong emotion in a short poem, and the result is more convincing : while it is hardly possible for any one to use borrowed notes in a long epic or tragic story. In a word, it is clear on the face of it, first, that it is more easy for lyrical poets than for any others to affect for the time to be other than their natural selves ; secondly, that this is done with much less difficulty with those particular feelings which are quick and impulsive than with those that are more enduring.

¹ Cic. *de Amic.* xxvi. 97.

The reason is that the more refined and tender feelings, such as, when once conceived, tinge with their own special quality the whole remaining outlook on life, can hardly, if ever, be satisfactorily assumed by any one, however skilful, either in poetry or in real life. Hence, 'elegiac' poems and those sonnets which are such favourites with the Italians, of which the renowned Petrarch gave the first, or certainly at least the most striking and finished examples, reveal to us more readily and decisively the genuine disposition of the author than those poems which move with quicker and more tripping step and are usually called 'Odes'.

I now proceed to the second consideration, to which 470 I referred as a reason why our judgement of the real disposition and attitude of lyric writers is generally less easy to form : and this resides in the nature and character of Poetry itself.

It is quite clear, indeed I fear I may have wearied you by dwelling on the point too often, that much of the very essence of Poetry lies in the fact that the poet's deepest and most intimate feelings do not indeed lie wholly hidden, but do take refuge as it were in a kind of sanctuary, behind a veil, and shrink from the full light of day. Now, in the case of those who set themselves to weave a regular plot, I mean dramatic and epic poets, it is obvious that the composer's personality naturally holds itself apart and retires into the background. Opinions are expressed, judgements passed, praise and blame are meted out, not however as the utterances of Homer or Aeschylus, but as those of an Achilles or a Prometheus. It is true that, even so, the poet's own hidden feelings—feelings sometimes of the most sacred nature, which he would scruple, and indeed which he would feel it a sin, to express directly—somehow find utterance : yet when a man speaks his own thoughts through another's lips modesty is observed, while the agitated, full heart is relieved.

It is perhaps due to the same cause that most of the writers of memorial elegies have recourse to similar expedients, and make some imaginary 'shepherd' play the mourner's part. This device, since it owes its origin to writers of the greatest name, Theocritus and Virgil, and was more than once adopted by our own Spenser, must not be wholly condemned: though I quite agree that hosts of writers in later times have employed it in a trivial and thoroughly inartistic fashion. But its special purpose seems to be that it enables a writer to utter, behind the thin veil of allegory, many things which he would never allow himself to speak publicly and openly: Meliboeus was thus enabled, for instance, freely and without danger, to lament his confiscated fields, the soldiers' licence, the harmful power of Caesar himself:¹ again, it enabled the *Thestylis* of Spenser² to describe intimately the woes and sorrows of the noble family of the Sidneys: and, more important still, the device enables the poet to introduce in support of the feeling which he is portraying, those objects in which all poets are wont, and rightly wont, to take eminent delight, woods, mountains, and trees, in short, all that belongs to the country and rural life. Note the special way in which Milton's *Lycidas* attracts us: there we rove at will amid shadowed hollows, flower-covered glades, gentle evening breezes—in fine, all those delights whereby Nature itself most soothes the sorrows of man. But there would, I apprehend, be no room for these charms were a writer forbidden to imagine for himself some pastoral scene, and to present himself in the guise of a sad shepherd leading his flock to pasture at early morn, and singing to himself amid his toil with passionate sorrow for his dead companion.

¹ Virg. *Ecl.* i.

² *The Mourning Muse of Thestylis* is supposed to have been written by Lodowick Bryskett.

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But now remember, that the whole tribe of lyrical poets (if that is the right name for them) cannot avail itself of this expedient of shifted responsibility, since in this species of poetry everything is uttered in the poet's own person. Consequently, the art and skill of the writer had to effect that which could not be effected by the nature of the poem : and let us see whether there are not two chief methods which enable lyrical poets to maintain the true dignity of poetic reserve, and to protect their inmost thoughts and enthusiasms and emotions from being exposed to the full blaze of daylight. I suggest that this is effected, first, by the tact or judgement of the writers, *in choosing subjects somewhat remote from those which in truth hold their affection*. Thus it comes about that, even if perchance they touch on these deepest subjects, they appear rather to fall in with them incidentally, than to have sought them purposely. But in the main they, as it were, trifle with and play round their dearest delights. Such is, to a great extent, the method of our own Herbert, who hides the deep love of God which consumed him behind a cloud of precious conceits : the 472 result appears to most readers inappropriate, not to say chilling and repellent. Fair-minded critics are wont to excuse him on the score of the taste and tone of the age in which he lived : still, granting as much weight as you choose to this cause, it will still be open to us to contend that it was Herbert's modest reserve which made him veil under these refinements his deep piety.

But the end which Herbert and many others effected mainly by choice of subject, some, unless I err, have attempted to gain by elaborate metrical devices. In all kinds of poetic work, indeed, as I laid down at the outset, the poet finds a real source of solace and soothing in even the very slight pains he has to take, verse after verse, to make the lines end rightly : by the recurring beat of the line, as by a regular touch of the hand, the restless and

troubled feelings are soothed, as children are by the croonings of their nurses. In all regions of Poetry, I repeat, this is of much importance : but I seem to detect a peculiar and emphatic appropriateness in it as regards lyrical writers. There have been, in fact, not a few writers of such consummate facility, that they could as easily set forth any subject whatsoever in metre, as others do in prose. Thus in order that their poetry may not, in large degree, fail of its due function, they spontaneously adopt a somewhat more complicated form : they give variety to their metre by many refined subtleties : build up period on period, mutually answering one another. In brief, with a marvellous skill, art of the most exquisite kind is made to minister its healing touch to disordered Nature. And this has the further effect, which more than anything powerfully ministers to that modest reserve which we have so often praised, that, by means of this expedient, we enjoy a kind of restful shade and retreat, specially grateful to the ardent feeling of a refined and diffident man. Indeed, to the inexperienced—to laymen as they may be called—the chief part of the poetic toil seems to be spent in versification and in elaboration of phrase. This effort is always obvious to

473 readers, while for a space the restless and strenuous turmoil of the poet's mind is withdrawn from sight. This is the origin of all circumlocutions and periphrases, under whose cover a writer over-sensitive of publicity can veil himself. Hence, the dramatists also, when they reach their choral songs, which have much the same nature as lyrical poems thrown off to suit the moment and adapted to the feelings of daily life : when, I repeat, they approach a choral song, we observe that at once they employ much more elaborate metres, with much stricter laws. I refer to the scheme which consists in a threefold sequence of stanzas or verses, marshalled with such delicate precision, not merely as to each line, but even to their smallest details, that not even

a syllable, whether long or short, can break away from its proper position : but any reader who has once mastered the opening lines has the key to the metrical arrangement of the whole poem. There is one feature that is scrupulously maintained, namely, that in each several metrical set, two opposite sides should answer each other in Antistrophic fashion, as it is styled : but the third part, which is called the epode, runs in a wholly different metre : and this, I apprehend, was purposely arranged lest too frequent repetition of the same beats might offend the sensitive ear of the Greeks.

You now perceive, I trust, what was, in all likelihood, the general scheme of the dramatic chorus : and I shall endeavour to show how much it accords with the structure of Pindar's verse, first, however, adding a few remarks which seem pertinent to the subject generally. In more modern days there has sprung up a new form of poem, and it is one of the most favourite forms in the present day, which more strictly than all others restrains the writer's powers within its own extremely narrow limits : I mean the sonnet, which I referred to before as having been first brought into repute among the Italians by Petrarch.

Since this particular form prescribes such scanty limits (for by inviolable rule it never exceeds fourteen lines) ; 474 and since it submits itself to the further difficult law that the lines must not only be of equal length, but also rhyme at definite intervals, and these intervals stand in uneven relation to each other, we cannot but wonder how it has come to pass that so many eager and enthusiastic temperaments have voluntarily submitted to these restraints. For, besides Petrarch to whom I have just referred, Dante Alighieri spent pains upon this form of poetry, and yielded to none in his scrupulous strictness : so too did the renowned Michael Angelo Buonarroti, a man of unfettered and colossal genius, whom no rules, not to say of any particular

art, but of any and every art easily held : so too did our own Spenser, at once the tenderest and most dignified of poets : not to mention more recent instances, not unworthy assuredly to be enrolled among this company. I am persuaded, indeed, that it was by no mere chance, but by a deeply-rooted instinct, that such men as these adopted this form, because the fact that it was unusually stringent enabled it to soothe and compose their deepest emotions and longings without violating a true reserve. Thus it resulted that all that vigorous mental force, which, if it had been without such poetic relief, might have ruined itself, was in a high degree enlarged and strengthened.

I now return to the lyric poets, and in particular to Pindar, the mention of whose works occasioned this digression. Now I imagine that no one, however slightly he has dipped into Pindar's poetry, can fail to note with what peculiar force all we have hitherto advanced concerning lyric writers in general, applies to him : namely, that it is a most arduous and complex business, in their case, to discover the one dominating thought or disposition in each. For not only are the Pindaric metres varied and
475 interwoven with wondrous skill, but he, more than any other writer, goes far afield in search of his themes, his sentiments, and all the other apparatus of his Odes. Both these reasons make it very difficult to conjecture the real ruling motives of his song. To begin with, the majority of his readers are at once, not only by the sound but also by the sense, led away from the subject of the poem and personal feeling of the poet to dwell upon the delicate melody of his verse. In the next place they feel, owing to the swift change and succession of idea and imagery, that their judgements are in some sort bewildered and dazzled, as our eyes are by rapid movements : and consequently they can perceive neither the aim and intent of the poet at any one time, nor the central feeling which actuates him.

Further, it must be remembered that in all Pindar's extant Odes, the poet did not choose his material for himself but had to accept what was given to him. Consequently, in addition to that reserve which he shares in common with other lyric poets to which we have already alluded, he laboured under the necessity of inventing for himself preluding themes, sometimes of great length, through which he might gradually approach some one of the real fountains of his own poetry. By such fountains I mean those images, emotions, and desires which filled his inmost soul.

And I seem by some chance to have arrived here, at a stage specially suitable for setting at rest a doubt which sometimes troubles those who treat of Poetry. For they are at a loss to know how it can possibly be, that the vivid inspiration of poets can obediently respond to a king's command or the clamour of the populace, or even to the unuttered tone and mood of a particular age : it is to them inexplicable that Virgil, at Caesar's bidding, betook himself to composing the *Aeneid* : or that Spenser devoted himself now to Epithalamia, now to Threnodies, just as the circumstances of one of his patrons required. And some perhaps have consequently suspected that the transports which professed poets exhibit and delight in, must be set down as assumed and unreal : inasmuch as they not only 476 serve the turn of the poet's friends, but also, which is even less honourable, are not unfrequently bought by money. But I should like these somewhat exacting critics to remember that it is an unfailing principle with genuine Poetry, at least with all that with perfect right can claim that honoured title, to seek retreat from publicity, to avoid the full light, to be coy and hesitant in unveiling its secrets save to any whom it believes touched with like enthusiasm. Consequently, it does not object to far-fetched subjects : indeed, one may say often prefers them : so long only as some secret path is open, whereby it may quietly digress to the themes

it naturally delights in and holds dear. And there is no reason, I imagine, why a theme should not be suggested by royal command, such as a clever poet can easily treat in a way which will bring relief to his own emotions.

Hence it may well be that, even in the case of Pindar, some unusually keen-sighted student may win his way through various bypaths and tributary streams to the main sources, the fountain-heads as I have called them, of his poetry. Though I grant it a disadvantage that there is not a single poem which the writer has composed on his own initiative: never once has he given himself the start. There was at one time, according to ancient authority, an immense collection of his various poems—Hymns, Dithyrambs, Banqueting Songs, Dirges: and did these survive to-day, we might more readily reach the poet's real mind. For judging by Horace's often quoted and most graceful ode:

Whether in dithyrambic roll
Pouring new words he burst away
Beyond control,
Or gods and god-born heroes tell,¹

we realize that he must have used great freedom both in metre and subject. But further, when we approach that
477 other class of poems which is extolled in the following stanza:

Or mourn the bridegroom early torn
From his young bride, and set on high
Strength, courage, virtue's golden morn,
Too good to die,²

we feel that such a theme, so diverse from the triumphal Odes, would assuredly shed a clearer light on the writer's genius and disposition. Since, however, by unhappy fate the greater part of his work has perished, while those that survive almost all relate to athletic victories, a subject both meagre in itself and marked by hardly the least

¹ Hor. *Odes*, iv. ii. 10 (Conington).

² Ibid.

variety of circumstance : we must trust to our own ingenuity to track out as best we may his hidden enthusiasms ; and this will be best accomplished if we observe into what haven his poetry puts for rest, after its many preludings and wanderings : what the quality of the digressions he chiefly affected : what are the themes in which his verse finds fullest play and richest melody.

For those who have experience know well, that there is a marvellous harmony between that in which the ear and that in which the mind takes pleasure : and thus when the poet approaches subjects which stand highest in his regard and are dear to his soul, the poem, precisely then, flows in freer vein, and the true feet, syllables, and rhymes more readily present themselves to the mind just as required. And undoubtedly verses whose glowing words or large and deep meaning testify that then, at all events, the author is adopting no conventional form, but writing from the inmost sincerity of his heart, do, somehow or other, for the most part, flow and fall more happily and with richer rhythm.

I will ask you then to let your ear judge by the mere test of sound one of the more celebrated of Pindar's poems. Let us take the very first that meets us :

Water the first of elements we hold :

And, as the flaming fire at night

Glow with its own conspicuous light,

Above proud treasure shines transcendent gold :

But if, my soul, 'tis thy desire

For the Great Games to strike thy lyre,

Look not within the range of day

A star more genial to descry

Than yon warm sun, whose glittering ray

Dims all the spheres that gild the sky ;

Nor loftier theme to raise thy strain

Than famed Olympia's crowded plain.¹

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¹ *Olymp.* i. 1 (A. Moore).

Is it not clear that this surpassing and unique splendour is set forth with a magnificent apparatus of sound and rhythm? And it was indeed a theme well worthy to possess the heart of this nobly great poet. Next, however, as he approaches the subject of his poem, he expresses himself, unless I am mistaken, in a key much nearer the language of everyday life :

From whence, by gifted minstrels richly wove,
 Th' illustrious hymn, at glory's call,
 Goes forth to Hiero's affluent hall,
 To hail his prosperous throne and sing Saturnian Jove.
 Hiero the just, that rules the fertile field,
 Where fair Sicilia's pastures feed
 Unnumbered flocks, and for his meed
 Culls the sweet flowers that all the virtues yield.¹

Then again, as it seems to me, from this verse onward the numbers rise and swell once more to higher strains: for in them he makes mention of the lyre and of lyric contests, a theme he never fails to follow with unflagging delight :

Such as the social feast around
 Full oft our tuneful band inspire—
 But wherefore sleeps the thrilling sound? ²

From these lines, and others like them, it may perhaps be seen that the ease and variety of the poet's numbers are of great import in guiding us to his personal feeling and disposition: just as a man's walk is an index to the movements of his mind.

Relying, gentlemen, upon such indications as these, I venture, unhesitatingly, to associate Pindar with the order of poets which we have described as containing those two noble ornaments—Homer and Aeschylus: so far, at any rate, that they were all attracted by the manners and times of the heroic age. Though, as to Aeschylus, it may be doubted whether he should be so assigned on any other

¹ *Olymp.* i. 14 (A. Moore).

² *Ibid.*

ground save that of time : since he was almost wholly pre-occupied with his own philosophy, or I should rather say religion : and only so far concerned with the deeds of kings and princes and with their fatal wars, as finding there an object-lesson whence he might illustrate the freaks of Fortune and the vain desires of man. I apprehend, however, that the chief reason why he devoted himself to heroic story was that in it could be more easily seen how divine and human affairs are interwoven, and that then there was a freer intercourse between heaven and earth. To which we may add that it was absolutely essential to select subjects a little removed from his own age : and that nothing lay so near his hand as the annals and records of the heroes, blended as they were, too, with the concerns of religion. The principle and motive of the Homeric poems have been heretofore sufficiently discussed in their proper place : where it was shown that the great poet was absorbed by a sort of passion for an age recently past, and thus sought relief and comfort for himself in his splendid imaginings of it.

But the case of Pindar, so far as I can conjecture, differs somewhat from either. He is unlike Aeschylus in that material objects of sense do not seem worthless in his eyes as compared with mystic and holy speculations : nor does he, as Homer, regret the departed age with a kind of affectionate grief. I think, however, the simple truth is that Pindar viewed with unsophisticated delight the remains and records of that bygone age ; was won by the splendour of its memories ; impressed by its glory and panoramic effect, and revelled, as it were, in the pictures and reflections of the years for ever flown. In short, Pindar's poems have much the same relation to the age which Homer sang, as the poetry which flourished three or four centuries ago bore to the marvels of the so-called Middle Ages. For, at that period, it was firmly held, not by the vulgar merely,

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480 but by many true and primary poets, that martial and knightly contests, fields of tourney and stately solemnities of royal palaces, were indissolubly associated with a bygone nobility of character. Thus both with Spenser and those poets of Italy on whom he modelled himself, we see prevailing all these imagined, artificial glories, not the very form and reality of a life lived under heaven's sun and amid dangerous adventure, but a sort of storied resemblance of it. Need we then be surprised that a man like Pindar should show himself capable of feeling emotion in contemplation of athletic toils and triumphs, the contests of Olympia, the wealth and banqueting of kings. Certainly, he felt that over all these things was cast the radiance of a bygone age: that for a passing moment there were called back to life, if not the actual force and almost divine spirit of the old heroes, yet at least a picturesque pageant of the time, traces of its surpassing beauty, and all the ancient dignity of feature, bearing, and speech.

Realizing, as I said, all this, Pindar blended passing events with ancient times in such wise that he does not seem to be praising the past, but rather fanning into flame the embers of a dying beauty: happy and gay scenes, for the most part, float before his vision: we see as Horace says, although,

He liked the high, he yet could grace the low.¹

What I mean may be shown by examples: though the point is of a kind little adapted to formal and strict demonstration. It is not every poet, in my opinion, who would be capable of showing a real and hearty enthusiasm for the struggles and contests in the games. Yet Pindar assuredly possessed this power, if indeed it is credible that such topics as he eagerly celebrates when the occasion demands should appeal to any one. But we know that

¹ Hor. *Ep.* 1. xvii. 24 (Conington).

Pindar took delight not merely in narrating the course and result of each triumph, but in developing its methods and causes, and showing in what skill especially each victor was pre-eminent. For instance, in congratulating the victor in the Pancration, he touches with keen insight upon each special merit of that form of contest ; first, that the victor had defeated such an array of athletes, following one after another in swift succession (*ἔφεδροι*) :

The brave unproved in silence die.
Warriors themselves, till fortune's hand
Th' ennobling victory gives, no fame command ;
For e'en the conqueror's wreath is fortune's gift.
Oft hath the feebler rival's shift
Filch'd from the best his undisputed crown.¹

And next he adds, a little further on the following exquisite appreciation of the same contest :

Branch of Telesias, like the roaring king
Of the rough woods in heart and strength is he,
Yet guileful as the fox might be
That stays the impetuous eagle's wing,
Couch'd on the ground supine below :
All sleights are just that foil the foe.

For he no vast Oärion port
Displays, of outward stature mean and short :—
In the fierce conflict stanch and terrible.²

Observe how penetratingly and truly he suggests the exercises of the wrestling school, and the supple movement of the limbs like those of boys at play ; yet never for a moment does he sink below the true standard of lyric poetry. Many such instances might be cited, which, quite incidentally, prove the writer both a careful and experienced observer of all the contests he celebrates. As where he honours Hiero, victor in the chariot race, in that :

With glittering hand and lenient rein he broke
His youthful coursers to the yoke.³

¹ *Isthm.* iii. 51 (Moore). ² *Ibid.* ³ *Pyth.* ii. 14 (12) (Moore).

And he thus commends a charioteer to his patron :

There, with no erring hand, the charioteer
His bounding steeds rebuked, and wound their fleet
career ;
For 'twas Nicomachus, whose well-timed skill,
With reins all loose, their fury drove.¹

With a well-chosen happy phrase he shows that the reins were not exactly guided, but rather that, as they lay loosely on the horses' necks, they answered at once to the slightest movement of the right hand.

482 But innumerable similes drawn from the gymnasia and the arena at Olympia occur all through his writings : and thus any one can see that his mind was informed and eager in these pursuits : so, he bursts forth, for instance :

O ! for a spirit that could bid
New words and quickening thoughts to rise,
Of skill the Muse's daring car to guide
In all the might of genius through the skies !²

One realizes here, without difficulty, that there rises before the writer's mind the vision of a charioteer holding his steeds well in hand, not only conscious of his strength but confident of a successful issue.

And there is that most beautiful touch where, being about to enter on some fabled story, he opens with a call such as drivers of four-horse chariots were wont to indulge in, as they advanced into the open field :

Bring forth thy mules, O Phintis, and behind
In haste the glittering harness join,
With me thy chariot mount and find
Along yon spacious road the cradle of his line.³

And there is another passage, where, as if he were a charioteer, he affects and emphasizes keen anxiety, lest

¹ *Isthm.* ii. 31 (20) (Moore). ² *Olymp.* ix. 120 (80) (Moore).

³ *Olymp.* vi. 37 (22) (Moore).

perchance the victor may not reach the goal with chariot
sound and whole :

Twelve times round the measured bourn
With heel unmatch'd, uninjured rein,
Flew the swift steeds, nor tire nor trapping torn—
Lo ! where by Delphi's fane
Hangs the fair chariot (sound and bright
As from the sculptor's hand it wheeled
Beneath the steep Crisaeon height
To th' hollow plain and sacred field),
Slung from the cypress beam, the God beside.¹

In truth Pindar, not unbecomingly, is filled with just as much anxiety about the wheels and pole of the chariots or the implements of the gymnasium as we saw that Homer was concerning arms and spears and every weapon needed 483 by warriors.

Passing on to other contests : two of these the author skilfully associates in this single line—' guided aright the course of blows.' ² The blows of the boxer are aptly joined with the chariot-racing in the arena ; since, in each, the main concern is for the champion to make straight for the goal in view. Then he proceeds to praise the victor in the boxing as one who is ' in the struggle of hands that bring limbs low, a cunning adversary '. As much as to say, that he ever keeps his presence of mind : even when striving with all his strength, most is achieved by skill.

In another ode, too, he shows himself not unversed in wrestling combat :

Like his that binds unrivall'd now
With wreaths of skill Melesias' brow.
Unmaster'd in the lists of song
His might each champion throws ;
Mild to the good, but roused by wrong,
Rough and revengeful on his recreant foes.³

¹ *Pyth.* v. 44 (30) (Moore).

² *Isthm.* iv. 76.

³ *Nem.* iv. 150 (Moore).

Again, do we not nearly always find that the formal shifts which Pindar, like all writers of longer poems, devises, whether to essay some higher flight or to return from it to his theme, are effected by phrases borrowed from athletics and gymnastics? As, for instance, when he is leading up to the praise of Hiero :

But thou this prince's praise to sing
 Intent, as some the brazen javelin wield,
 Urge not thy song beside the field,
 But forward far, where rivals ne'er can fling.¹

Sometimes he goes to quoit-throwers for his metaphor, lest any form of athletic contest may be unhonoured :

O ! could I hurl as far, as long,
 The disk, the javelin of my song,
 As thy sweet sire in goodness all outshone !²

484 Nor does he overlook contests with bow and arrow ; though I doubt whether this exercise ever won for itself a footing in athletic games—at all events, not in those of Greece. Still, its quality is such that a frequent reference to it implies a tone of mind by no means without enthusiasm for athletics. Consider then if the following lines do not well fall in with our present argument :

On my quiver'd arm I bear
 Many an arrow swift and rare ;
 Heed not thou their envious tongue,
 Straight to the mark advance thy bow ;
 Whither, brave spirit, shall thy song
 Throw the shaft of glory now ?
 Lo it flies, by Justice sent,
 Full at famous Agrigent.³

Of like import is a passage in which he checks himself lest

¹ *Pyth.* i. 81 (Moore).

² *Isthm.* ii. 51 (35) (Moore).

³ *Olymp.* ii. 150 (83) (Moore).

his praises miss the mark by being aimed in too many directions :

But while direct the lance of song we send,
What boots it from the tuneful string
Far from the mark our shafts to fling ? ¹

But of these enough and to spare. It remains to quote a few passages whose importance lies in proving that Pindar sympathized with athletes in a marvellous degree. First, as regards the toil itself : in one place he congratulates a competitor, because

Thou with unswelter'd neck, with limbs untired,
Didst in thy gripe the wrestler's rage repress,
Ere day's meridian flame thy limbs had fired :—
Toil, that but raised the raptures of success.²

He pictures the defeated rival slinking homeward : we see the humiliation, the sense of shame with which each finds some nook in which to hide :

To them the Pythian judge profound
Doom'd not the sweet return, nor smile of love
From fond maternal grace to meet ;
Pierced with their sad mischance, alone,
By path forlorn they slink and secret street,
The taunting foe to shun.³

And, on the other hand, what of the glorious victor ? Is he ⁴⁸⁵ wholly without care ? is he wholly swathed in delight, sure of his renown ? Truly, he too has his anxieties, and apprehensions : though they are blended with the unspeakable sweetness of triumph. Listen :

But he, that hath some recent glory gain'd,
On Exultation's wings,
Lord of his hope, triumphant springs
To heights which Wealth's low cares can ne'er ascend.⁴

¹ *Olymp.* xiii. 132 (93) (Moore).

² *Nem.* vii. 106 (72) (Moore).

³ *Pyth.* viii. 119 (83) (Moore).

⁴ *Ibid.*

And the following lines are of like ring, though less clearly expressed :

For various ties, as love or fame inspire,
 Our mortal hearts engage.
 He that holds his hope's reward
 The present bliss by heaven supplied
 With liveliest care will guard ;
 For hours to come no wisdom can provide.¹

What, we ask, is this care, this anxiety, the restless and urging hope, which forbids man to be happy, even after a second victory ? The truth is, that he who had prevailed in lesser competitions almost always let his ambition look forward to Olympia : and even he who had triumphed there was not wholly free from the longings of disturbing ambition, ever pressing towards higher achievements. For each of these, Pindar has a characteristic word of comfort : for to stimulate the former he exalts the Olympic crown with extraordinary honour ; and, in relief of the latter, he enlarges on the theme so often dwelt on, both by poets and philosophers, urging that unbounded ambition should be satisfied when once the goal is attained. We will quote a few instances of each of these.

In the first he most gracefully flatters an Isthmian victor who is looking forward to Olympia, taking his metaphors from banquet and feast :

As with replenish'd bowl the banquet glows,
 Again for Lampon's brave athletic line
 We mix the Muses' cup divine :
 The first to Jove was pour'd, when round their brows
 486 His Nemean braid illustrious hung ;
 This to the despot of the seas,
 And fifty damsels fair from Nereus sprung,
 For wreaths by youngest born Phylacides
 From Isthmian rivals torn : on Pisa's plain
 Oh ! that 'twere theirs a third to gain,

Pyth. x. 95 (60) (Moore).

Mine in the Olympian Saviour's name to shed
The full mellifluous hymn on blest Aegina's head.¹

It may be remarked that on this theme he more than once employs circumlocution and veiled expression ; which are usually the resource of those in love, and indeed of any whose minds are set on some high thought, such as they could not venture to express openly in the hearing of all men. Again, some competitor has carried off first honours at Nemea and Pindar thus forecasts his future :

Yet oft, if right-directing time
Dooms him th' Athenian name to grace,
And gives him, like his sire, to climb
The steeps of glory's race,
With conquering hand Timonous' son
Shall pluck, from Isthmian contests won,
The fairest wreaths they yield,—
Oft rise victorious from the Pythian field.²

Observe how with scrupulous reverence he avoids mention of Olympia, the very thought in all men's minds. Nor must we pass over unnoticed the following lines, profoundly impressive assuredly, and well worthy to stand as a model of true prayer :

First of the first he shone
'Mongst all the Hellenian host in Pytho's groves ;
Isthmian and Nemean crowns his prowess won ;
Fortune still follows as he moves.
Thrice at the gates that flank the main,
Thrice on the consecrated plain
Whose weal th' Adrastian laws diffuse,
He sow'd the harvest of the Muse.
Paternal Jove ! the wish that fires his breast
His lip reveals not : but all things in thee
End and begin : by dangers none repress'd,
His toil-train'd heart but asks what all the brave
would be.

¹ *Isthm.* vi. 1 (Moore).

² *Nem.* ii. 9 (6) (Moore).

What the Muse hopes the godhead knows ;
 Knows he whose soul for glory glows,
 Who pants to bind him with th' Heraclian wreaths,
 Which Pisa's noblest rite bequeaths.¹

The other condition, as already stated, concerned those unable to satisfy their ambition even with an Olympic
 487 victory: and, with their praises, he is wont to blend impressive warning :

If Wealth and Worth and Happiness and Fame
 Be thine, among the Gods seek not t' inscribe thy
 name.²

And again :

Two things alone, with wealth combined,
 Feed life's fair flower, and thus bestow
 Joy's purest blessings on mankind ;—
 These are fair fortune and recording fame.
 Aspire not to be Jove ; all things are thine,
 If these great gifts thy destiny may claim :
 To mortal hopes thy mortal means confine.³

Hence springs a famed array of richly coloured passages ;
 for instance, the lines referring to the pillars of Hercules :

If then with manliest beauty graced,
 And rich in deeds that form to suit,
 The son of Aristophanes hath placed
 On glory's loftiest peak his daring foot,
 There must he pause ; 'tis no mean task to brave
 Beyond th' Herculean rocks th' unnavigable wave :
 Rocks, which the hero-god stupendous piled,
 His proud memorial, to display
 The limit of his wondrous way.⁴

And these again, about the race of Hyperboreans :

'Tis not for man to climb the brazen heaven ;
 They on the farthest fairest beach
 The bark of mortal life can reach,

¹ *Nem.* x. 46 (25) (Moore).

² *Isthm.* v. 14 (12) (Moore).

³ *Olymp.* v. 55 (23) (Moore).

⁴ *Nem.* iii. 31 (19) (Moore).

Through dangers braved their sails display.
 But who with venturous course through wave or waste
 To Hyperborean haunts and wilds untraced
 E'er found his wondrous way ? ¹

And sometimes he brings in to strengthen his appeal the
 warning of the folly that tried to scale heaven itself :

Man is too brief long aims to reach ;
 Presumptuous hope, that fain would stretch
 To heaven's high throne her daring view,
 Is but the winged steed that threw
 Bellerophon, what time his frenzied pride
 Aspired to tread th' eternal domes above
 And sit amongst the peers of Jove.²

All these many passages make it quite clear, I think, that Pindar was, as it were, bound closely to his athletic victors by sympathetic feeling and inclinations. Something yet 488 remains for me to add on this subject, more indeed than can be conveniently dealt with in this lecture. We will, if you please, defer it to a future occasion. I only wish to add a warning against the opinion which some may share that all these subjects are unworthy of being dwelt upon, as being utterly trivial and ridiculous. But, on the contrary, I have to some extent already made clear, and I hope at the proper time, to the best of my ability, to show rational ground for believing that a great poet might well, and not unworthily, have devoted his genius to these themes.

¹ *Pyth.* x. 41 (27) (Moore).

² *Isthm.* vi. 60 (43) (Moore).

It is shown that the Public Games afforded Pindar an ample field for his genius. Many examples adduced illustrating his temperament and disposition : such, more particularly, as either describe the rewards of victory or are consistent with the athletic type of character.

SHOULD any of my hearers be inclined to consider that, in assigning the public gymnastic contests as the peculiar source of Pindar's inspiration, we have confined him within over-narrow limits or assigned to him a trivial and childish subject, let him, I beg, remember in the first place, what will be plain to every one, that, in the political conditions of those times, gymnastic pursuits and athletic skill were most important to the very highest interests of the Greek nation. War at that period was waged incessantly : the nation had few soldiers to place in the field, and their equipment and manner of fighting were such that success mainly depended on the physical strength and agile movements of individuals : and consequently the fortunes of a battle generally turned upon the prowess of one or two of the leading combatants. Moreover, the common safety of all Greece, which was constantly, throughout all Pindar's life, 490 in grave peril from the menacing power of Persia, seemed to be very closely bound up with these contests. For what was the purpose of those solemn ceremonies and sacrifices, of those days of festival set apart in honour of the Gods, of the names of the old heroes honourably and religiously proclaimed near their sepulchres, of the wreaths placed on their monuments, the dirges sung in their honour ? what but that the devotion of their fathers and ancestors might sink more deeply into the minds of the Greeks, and the whole nation be kindled to resentment against those who

had plundered their temples, and destroyed their statues ? And on these same festival days did not all revive in memory, nay almost picture to themselves the actual presence of, those bygone warriors, their nation's glory, of whom the greater and nobler part, namely, the comrades of Hercules and Agamemnon, had most bravely fought against these very Asiatics ?

But, to confess the truth, I am hardly inclined to believe that these public considerations ever occurred to Pindar by way of justifying to himself the choice of his subject as being not wholly unworthy of serious and great poetry. Far other, unless I am mistaken, has generally been the training of those who have in different ages performed the functions of great poets. As a general rule, Nature, or what is styled chance, has so trained them from their earliest days that their childish games and pleasures have served as a kind of school, wherein they might test their strength and gradually rise to higher things. And thus, rather by a fortunate providence than by any conscious deliberation of their minds, each is guided to whatever is the true bent of his own genius. May not Pindar, a child of Thebes, a city which boasted its own special games and was not far from Delphi and the Pythian contests, which also was (as Pindar often reminds us) connected with Aegina by very close ties, may not Pindar, I say, almost from his cradle have haunted the gymnasia, mixed with the athletes, and followed heart and soul the fortunes of the competitors ?

Should any one be inclined to dismiss this as a poor and prosaic suggestion, let him call to mind the beginnings of 491 any great work, so far as it is possible to infer them. He will find it a general rule, which applies not only to poets but to all who in any way aim at intellectual production, that their task advances much more smoothly and effectively when they start from some minuter point of detail,

than if they endeavour at once to embrace the whole range of their subject. Often have I heard it remarked by experienced teachers that the style and manner of young writers are best formed by proposing to them limited and somewhat unexciting subjects, rather than those of wider scope : the truth being that, to use the phrase of logicians, it is more fitting and more direct to proceed from particulars to generals, than from generals to particulars. Probably this principle holds with especial force in poetry, where the judgement of the eyes and not of the mind alone has greater reach and effect, the whole function of sight being directed towards particular objects.

125 Nor are we herein denying poets the very amplest freedom to range whithersoever their fancy leads them. For every one is familiar with the alert, unwearied, unbounded power of memory, by which all that has been done, said, seen, thought in the same localities or at the same time is wonderfully collected and united in a harmonious whole. Who, for instance, among the old Greeks, if he had once heard the legend, related somewhere by Pindar, of the way in which the olive-tree was introduced into Greece in order to give their true and permanent honour to the contests when first established, ever looked at the olive-wreath without at once calling to mind memories of Hercules and Olympia ? And you may, I think, easily appreciate that there is hardly anything in the world of Nature which will not be connected in some such way either with some traditional story or with some exquisite simile.

492 For, in truth, all things which at any time either have occurred or will occur to us, seem mutually connected in an infinite, though mysterious, sequence ; each detail in the sequence has its exact significance and position. And, as far as I can see, when any one has the gift—and this gift has always been deemed the special prerogative of inspired

genius—of picking up a thread and clearly and effectively following it through all its windings, there is nothing to prevent his linking the humblest beginnings with the noblest issues. Still less was there any obstacle to hinder the prince of lyric poets from blending all that is greatest and most sacred with the gymnasium and the arena. Undoubtedly, just as some philosophers, and those of no mean authority, assert, there exists a common bond which links together all the 'humaner' arts, all the various divisions of strict science, and indeed everything that can be classed under any one genus: one consequence of which fact is that, as was pointed out by the keen penetration of Bishop Butler, 'No one can tell whether any single truth may not be so consequent on all truths, for the most part in ways mysterious and unseen, but so notwithstanding that on denial of a single one all fall and dissolve.'¹ So, precisely, all votaries of poetry well know, that whatever subject comes to hand or occurs to their mind may be turned to their purpose, if only a writer has the true spiritual fire and devotes himself heart and soul to his task.

In view of all this, we must hesitate to conclude that Pindar has not been assigned a sufficiently ample field, when it is asserted that the whole secret of his poetry can be explained as originating in his delight in the gymnasia and athletic contests. We have, it will be remembered, so far dealt in detail with this position, as to make clear by numerous quotations that Pindar had an extraordinarily keen sympathy with athletes, at least in the very hour of the contest.

Now let us pass to consider the rewards of victory: the 493 proclamation, wreaths, the festal procession, the triumphal ode: in all of which Pindar, as was meet and right, felt a special delight. A wealth of instances, richer perhaps and more numerous than those before cited, will readily

¹ *Anal.* Part I, ch. vii, p. 173, Ed. Oxf. 1807.

offer themselves : to reduce them to some order, we will first deal with those common to the whole company of athletes : and next, those in which we fully allow there is blended a quality special and peculiar to Pindar himself.

Now nothing, I apprehend, was held in higher esteem, nothing was more pleasing to victors, than the proclamation of their names with the name of their father and their country in full assembly of their countrymen by the public herald. It would be surprising, therefore, if 'the sweet-tongued voice of the good herald'¹ did not from time to time come in for its meed of honour at the hands of Poets of the Contests ; particularly as Greek antiquity ever attributed a sort of religious sanctity to the herald's function. Thus Pindar congratulates the colony of Aetna, because Hiero the Pythian victor chose that she and not his native Syracuse should be named in the customary formula of proclamation :

Graced with whose name the bordering state below
Shares its great founder's large renown,
By herald's voice at Pytho's listening games
Declared : while Hiero's chariot-crown,
A monarch's meed, th' inspiring note proclaims.²

Where there is tacit reference, I apprehend, to the time-honoured chant :

Huzza,
Rejoice, O glorious, noble Hercules,
And Iolaus also,—two great warriors—
Huzza.

This was the song which, with a well-known tune, was ordinarily used in Panegyrics, if any one of the athletes had no special poet to sing his praises. Surely there is an
494 allusion to this chant both here and when he honours Arcesilaus ?

¹ *Olymp.* xiii. 100.

² *Pyth.* i. 59 (31) (Moore).

Him, who sends from Pytho's hills
 The graceful song, that far o'erbuys
 The cost of conquest, to the prince that fills
 The praises of the wise.¹

And indeed he alludes to it more than once elsewhere. It was just what we should expect of a poet, for whom everything to do with Olympia had a special charm, to remember with notable pleasure a chant specially associated with the place itself. As for the herald take these beautiful lines :

If yet, Agesias, thy maternal race,
 Whose affluent dwellings rose by old Cyllenè's base,
 Have knelt at Mercury's sacred shrine
 The swift-wing'd herald of the skies,
 With soothing prayers and gifts divine.²

(He alludes gracefully, as with a master's touch to the victor's family, living in happy possession of local honour and ancestral faith, at home amid their own hills. But, on mention of Mercury, the poet at once remembers the herald, who, not so long ago, celebrated Agesias with his proclamation : and with ingenious subtlety he attributes his functions to the herald of the gods.)

(He guards the games, allots the prize
 And loves Arcadia's youth) ; 'twas he,
 Aided by thundering Jove's regard,
 Gave, son of Sostratus, to thee
 Thy conquest and reward.³

In another ode he claims the function of herald for himself :

Herald of th' athletic fray
 Fought in famed Olympia's vale,
 In Nemean grove and Isthmian bay
 The brave Theandrian tribe I hail.⁴

Under this head may perhaps be fitly placed Pindar's references to solemn oaths, which we meet with more than

¹ *Pyth.* v. 141 (98) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* vi. 130 (77) (Moore).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Nem.* iv. 119 (74) (Moore).

once. At Olympia in those times the use of a formal oath
495 was very common : not only were the judges sworn, but
even each of the competitors before entering the contest :
facts which perhaps throw some light on these lines of
Pindar's :

Nor brawl, nor paradox I love ;
I hate with cavillers to contend ;
But this my surest oath I've pledged to prove,
And the mellifluous Muse her lasting aid shall lend.¹

Moreover, on one occasion the poet deliberately and
willingly gives a solemn pledge himself. He consoles his
friend because :

Him sickly hope and pale parental fear
Held from the triumphs of the Pythian field,
From the rich risks Olympian chaplets yield :
Else (by my judgement's pledge, my oath, I swear)
From those stern pastimes his superb return
Had left his vanquish'd foes to mourn
By lone Castalia's murmuring rill,
And seek the sheltering oaks that shade the Cronian
hill.²

But, returning to the victor's rewards : immediately after
the proclamation followed the crowning with the wreath :

Champions, whose brows th' Aetolian seer,
That gives th' Herculean mandates old,
The Game's unerring arbiter,
Bids Victory's graceful prize enfold :
He round their locks the silvery olive flings.³

How highly Pindar rated this function may be inferred
from the fact that he did not in the least hesitate to com-
pare the toil of the Muses themselves with the handiwork
of those who curiously wrought the wreath :

No skill the vulgar chaplets ask ;
Reck not, my Muse, the unworthy task :

¹ *Olymp.* vi. 31 (19) (Moore).

² *Nem.* xi. 27 (Moore).

³ *Olymp.* iii. 20 (11) (Moore).

Thou, with rich ivory chased, thy golden crown
Dost weave with choral flowers from fostering sea-
dews blown.¹

Indeed, he devotes a whole strophe, and a most beautiful one, to glorifying the discovery of the olive :

Whose leaves of yore Amphitryon's son,
To frame Olympia's matchless crown,
From freezing regions brought, and Ister's shadowy
springs.
He th' Hyperborean tribes and chieftains wild,
That bend the knee before Apollo's shrine,
Peaceful besought ; and with persuasion mild,
To form his Sire's capacious grove divine,
The conqueror's wreath, the stranger's shade,
Won the fair plant.²

And we may fitly notice here, I think, those exquisite lines 496
in which with great care he sings the praise of spring with
all its rich hues—a theme, fully worked in later times, but
rare at least among the ancient Greeks :

' In Argive Nemea the prophet of the god overlooketh
not the branch of palm, what time with the opening of the
chamber of the Hours, the nectarous plants perceive the
fragrant spring.

Then, then are strown over the face of the eternal earth
the lovely violet-tufts, then are roses twined in hair, then
sound to the flute's accompaniment voices of song, then
sound our choice hymns unto the honour of bright-filleted
Semele.'³

Observe that the time of year is indicated not by rising
and setting of the stars, nor (as Virgil would have done)
by the labours of the farm, but by a detail which would
have occurred to none but a writer whose whole heart
was in gymnastic pursuits and the Grecian Games. He
who writes as the Sacred Priest of the Nemean festival

¹ *Nem.* vii. 112 (77) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* iii. 22 (13) (Moore).

³ *Fragm. Dithyr.* iii. 12, p. 125 (Mr. Ernest Myers's translation,
p. 173 ; by kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.).

notes as the surest accompaniment of spring that the tender shoots are budding on the sacred palm, a wand of which was placed in the Victor's hands at Nemea. Can the real bias of the poet, intent heart and soul on the prizes of victory, escape any reader ?

But Pindar touches somewhat sparingly upon this subject of wreaths : it is of extremest simplicity and hardly capable of much variety. Far more numerous are the references to banquets, and especially the Triumphal Procession (*Kômos*) : this is a field on which Pindar delighted to expatiate, for it was full of splendour and joyance, and gave freedom and scope to his happy and enthusiastic temperament. Thus, for instance, he compares the gift of poetry with a cup of wine pledged at a marriage rite :

497 As one, whose wealthy hands enfold
 The sparkling cup of massy gold
 Froth'd with the vineyard's purple tide,
 His Banquet's grace, his Treasure's pride,
 Presents it to the youthful spouse,
 Pledg'd in full draught from house to house ;
 And thus, affection's honours fondly paid,
 While on the soft connubial hour
 Encircling friends their blessings pour,
 Gives to his envied arms the coy consenting maid.
 Thus to the Youth, whose conquering brow
 The Olympian wears or Pythian bough,
 Lord of his hope, inspired I pay
 The tribute of my liquid lay,
 The nectar of the Muse's bowl,
 Press'd from the clusters of the soul.¹

No one can fail to be touched by this most charming picture of domestic happiness, which this consummate artist has sketched, almost by the way, in a line or two. But it is remarkable that his mind instinctively seeks out just those images which are usually associated with victory at

¹ *Olymp.* vii. 1 (Moore).

the games. He uses a like comparison in the fifth Isthmian Ode, but there it is to give us a picture not so much of domestic happiness as of religious piety :

As with replenish'd bowl the banquet glows,
 Again for Lampon's brave athletic line
 We mix the Muses' cup divine :
 The first to Jove was pour'd, when round their brows
 His Nemean braid illustrious hung ;
 This to the despot of the seas,
 And fifty damsels fair from Nereus sprung,
 For wreaths by youngest born Phylacides
 From Isthmian rivals torn ; on Pisa's plain
 Oh ! that 'twere theirs a third to gain,
 Mine in the Olympian Saviour's name to shed
 The full mellifluous hymn on blest Aegina's head.¹

This variety may perhaps be due to some specific difference between the two victors honoured. We know that Phylacides, at all events, in whose celebration the poet introduces this banquet-custom, was, at the time, eager and intent for the Olympia : a condition of affairs with which the reference to the votive cup well accords. Of Diagoras we read nothing of that sort : we merely hear of many triumphs by which he had shed honour upon his native Rhodes. Nevertheless, if any one perchance likes to imagine that he had but lately married some noble lady, he would 498 not in my opinion be very far from the truth.

Once more, in another ode Pindar celebrates banqueting delights not in figure but in direct description :

But 'tis the generous bowl that gives
 Clearness and courage to the minstrel's throat—
 The prompting prophet of his note.
 Bid the sparkling beverage dance,
 The silver circling goblets shine
 With the stout offspring of the vine ;—
 Goblets, which erst in Chromius' car,

¹ *Isthm.* vi. 1 (Moore).

Crown'd with Apollo's glittering bough,
 Which justice weaves for glory's brow,
 The conquering coursers whirl'd from far—
 From Sicyon's sacred field.¹

With characteristic appropriateness he introduces into triumphal banquet the bowls and goblets which had been won at former contests.

Nor should it, I think, be unnoticed that he deemed the bath, that resource of the athlete and refreshing concomitant of banquets, worthy of honour in finished song :

The bath's warm waves not so reclaim,
 So rouse the champion's fainting frame,
 As praises bland his soul inspire,
 Warbled on truth's delightful lyre.²

This indeed is but once referred to : but the festive dance and procession of revellers, with which it was usual for the victor's friends to receive him at his home, are again and again extolled in his odes, and always with a striking indication that he is himself joining in the welcome. But in order to appreciate more intimately Pindar's high aims in dealing with this theme, let us inquire what was the exact significance of such processions. After the wreath had been conferred, the victor with his comrades and other friends proceeded to a temple, sacred to one of the Gods. Then, having duly made his vows and offerings, he was led back under their escort amid friendly shouting and songs. This procession might however take place, either at the very spot where the games were celebrated, or after the triumphant athlete's return, at his own home ; but in either case it was a necessary part of the pageant that the ' triumph-song ' (*ἐπινίκιον*) should be sung.

499 Now, it will, I think, be found—and this has special reference to our present discussion—that, in the case of

¹ *Nem.* ix. 115 (48) (Moore).

² *Nem.* iv. 7 (Moore).

almost all his Odes, the poet was relying upon a chorus at the victor's home, not on one at Delphi or Olympia in the moment of the competition. In fact, I fancy no doubtful indications may be detected, that all Pindar's Panegyrics—perhaps excepting three or four of the Olympian—were first sung, either in the native country, or, at all events, at the abode of those whom he celebrated. It follows that he was able more than any other poet to introduce a marvellous variety in his themes, to suit the spirit of each locality or the different legends which might be associated with each particular region.

And I think all recognize, how much it makes for the grace and elegance of such poems as these, if ideas and emotions instead of roaming at random, are located, if possible, in some known region and neighbourhood. So powerful is the effect of this, that Homer, Virgil, and others often designedly interweave with their stories the names of country houses, towns, and rivers, even if they are unknown to the readers, sometimes introducing the bare name, sometimes adding some one simple epithet : so important did they feel it to influence and interest their readers by some appearance of reality, however slight. For, somehow or other, the mere mention of definite names, is wont to make men at once picture to their imagination the appearance of regions and localities. Here is an instance from Virgil :

Mutuscans from their olive-bearing town,
 And all th' Eretian powers : besides a band
 That follow'd from Velinum's dewy land,
 And Amiternian troops, of mighty fame,
 And mountaineers, that from Severus came,
 And from the craggy cliffs of Tetrica,
 And those where yellow Tyber takes his way,
 And where Himella's wanton waters play.
 Casperia sends her arms, with those that lie
 By Fabaris, and fruitful Foruli ;

The warlike aids of Horta next appear,
 And the cold Nursians come to close the rear,
 Mix'd with the natives born of Latine blood,
 Whom Allia washes with her fatal flood.¹

Or if an example from Homer be preferred, any number can be quoted from the catalogue of ships :

Th' inhabitants of Hyria, and stony Aulida,
 Schaene, Scole, the hilly Eteon, and holy Thespia,
 Of Graea, and great Mycalesse, that hath the ample
 plain,
 500 Of Harma, and Ilesius, and all that did remain
 In Eryth, and in Eleon, in Hylen, Peteona.²

—with very many more.

I fully grant, indeed, that this mention of names was especially pleasing to the ears of Greeks, since they themselves had a great knowledge of the localities ; and at times they would have the pleasure of recognizing an allusion to their own native land or home. Nevertheless, even now among ourselves, so far removed from these regions, I submit that lists like these are by no means without attraction. And still less do we resent such preludes to his Odes, as Pindar so finely composed :

Come, heavenly muse, the mother of my song,
 To fair Aegina's Dorian isle
 With many a stranger throng'd, the while
 Nemea's high games the sacred moon prolong ;—
 Come, for behold from far the youthful band,
 Framing their sweet triumphal air,
 By old Asopus' banks to hear
 Thy dulcet voice impatient stand.³

Observe how simply this is presented : the company of Theban youths pauses on its journey towards Aegina, expecting the descent of the Muse to lead both their song and their march : the scene being summoned vividly before us, by the mere mention of the banks of the Asopus.

¹ *Aen.* vii. 711 (Dryden).

² *Il.* ii. 496 (Chapman).

³ *Nem.* iii. 1 (Moore).

Sometimes the chorus, still answering to the music's notes, is borne across the sea : as for instance, to Rhodes, that the victory of Diagoras may be duly honoured :

Blest they, whose deeds applauding worlds admire !
 For them, as each her glance partakes,
 The life-enlightening Grace awakes
 The various vocal flute, the sweet melodious lyre.
 To-day the lyre and flute and song,
 Roused by Diagoras, I move,
 Hymning fair Rhode, from Venus sprung,
 The Sun's own Nymph and watery love.¹

Here the word in the original (*κατέβαν*) suggests to our imagination the procession just as it has come from the ship and spreading itself out on the shore of that famous harbour.

These are assuredly splendid lines : but far more impressive are those in another ode where he approaches Syracuse after Hiero's Pythian victory. Hiero was, in 501 fact, at the time, in poor health : so, seizing his opportunity, Pindar gives an exquisite account of the birth of Aesculapius, his teaching and his death : and here he draws largely from profoundly sacred religious sources. But note how easily and delicately his song at length passes to Hiero himself, and the procession just arrived at Syracuse :

But O ! that still yon mountain cave
 Sage Chiron held, where this mellifluous strain
 With tuneful charm his heart might move
 Some healing power to send, from Jove
 Or Phoebus sprung, with spells endued
 To still the pangs that rack the good.
 With him the bounding bark I'd mount,
 And ride the rough Ionian wave,
 By Arethusa's bubbling fount
 My kind Aetnaean host to save :

¹ *Olymp.* vii. 20 (11) (Moore).

Him Syracuse reveres, her lenient king,
 Whose pride ne'er pined at Virtue's just success ;
 Whose love th' unfriended strangers bless—
 O ! could I reach thy realm, and bring
 Health, golden Health, with Song to grace
 The wreath that crown'd thy Pythian race,
 (Which late from Cirrha to thy shore
 The matchless Pherenicus bore),
 Then should thy glorious minstrel shine
 From far with beams of goodlier light,
 With two such gifts advancing o'er the brine,
 Than yon celestial star to thy rejoicing sight.¹

We have vision of the goddess of Health herself with her priestess, accompanying the triumphal chorus. And what are we to say of that vivid picture of the happy constellation rising in the far East over the horizon ? These are conceived in a vein which at once makes us feel in the presence of a poet, ' not made but born.'

In another opening too, he magnificently declares that the Hours themselves, that is, the goddesses of the seasons, who watch over the moments fixed by fate, are taking their part in the festive crowd which comes to announce the triumph :

502 O Thou, that driv'st in clouds above
 Th' impetuous Thunder, mighty Jove !
 Me with my lyre and varying strain
 Thy circling Hours have sent again
 Their tuneful witness to proclaim
 The glories of thy matchless game.

O hear the advancing choir prolong,
 Moved by the Graces, their triumphal song.²

Our own Cowley has touched the same theme in a strain, which not only rises to Pindar's own heights, but even—surprising as that is—surpasses him in the judgement of many. This is his effort :

¹ *Pyth.* iii. 111 (63) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* iv. 1 (Moore).

Begin the song, and strike the living lyre ;
 Lo ! how the years to come, a numerous and well-
 fitted quire,
 All hand in hand do decently advance,
 And to my song with smooth and equal measures dance !
 Whilst the dance lasts, how long soe'er it be,
 My musick's voice shall bear it company ;
 Till all gentle notes be drowned
 In the last trumpet's dreadful sound :
 That to the spheres themselves shall silence bring,
 Untune the universal string.¹

But while Cowley in these lines, in which it is not his own genius but the influence of a divine prophecy that inspires him, shows himself the more impressive and grander of the two : yet was Pindar in all other respects much the more highly gifted : and he never loses the glow of true inspiration through any ambitious over-refinement. Would that Cowley had exhibited the same good judgement ! Take, for instance, the lines which Pindar addresses to the leader of Agesias' triumphal procession. The victor was by descent an Arcadian, though owning Sicily as his native land, and so the poet makes the procession proceed from Stymphalus in Arcadia to Syracuse. And as this was a somewhat unwonted procedure, Aeneas, who heads the triumph, is instructed how to perform his task. First, starting from the Arcadian city they were to bid formal farewell to its guardian deity—Juno :

Rise, Aenēas, and enjoin thy swelling choirs
 To sing Parthenian Juno.²

Then on the actual journey, or rather voyage, they must 503 take pains with their allotted task, training themselves in the words and tunes of Pindar's ode. And here our poet, with his usual freedom, jests with his theme, alluding to

¹ Cowley, *Pindaric Odes* : *The Resurrection*.

² *Olymp.* vi. 149 (Moore).

a proverb which ridiculed the Boeotians, either for the dulness of their climate or the dulness of their brains :

then declare,
If the stale stigma that belied our sires,
(Boeotian boars forsooth) ! we still shall bear.¹

Next, honourably addressing the leader in friendly speech, he declares :

Thou art Truth's harbinger, the Muse's tongue,
Her mystic staff, the cup that pours her potent song.²

It was assuredly curiously apt to style the chief singer the Muse's 'mystic staff', implying that he would act as interpreter, and supply the key to the cipher employed in the subtle refinements of the poet's verse. We thence infer that, in Pindar's judgement, the musical tune is most closely connected with the poet's style and meaning : and that one who knows the tune well, has a clue which may often guide him into the poet's secret meaning. But in calling Aeneas

the cup that pours her potent song,

is he not hinting at that extraordinarily happy power of exquisite singing, which enables it subtly to evoke one after another the many kindred emotions : to such degree that, frequently by a single modulation of the melody, we seem led, by different paths, into fresh varieties of song. Fitly, therefore, is the great artist of song termed a cup or mixing-bowl of songs, implying that those who hear may sip from him not of one alone but of many of the rills of poetry. After this Pindar next passes with his revellers across
504 the Ionian Sea : the leader is adjured to remember Syracuse, since he is now not far from that port, and then by an easy transition he passes to the conventional and usual laudations of Hiero himself :

¹ *Olymp.* vi. 149 (Moore).

² *Ibid.*

Bid them remember Syracuse, and sing
 Of proud Ortygia's throne, secure
 In Hiero's rule, her upright king.
 With frequent prayer he serves and worship pure
 The rosy-sandal'd Ceres, and her fair
 Daughter, whose car the milk-white steeds impel,
 And Jove, whose might th' Aetnean fires declare.¹

It would seem, I have little doubt, that Hiero was just at that time keeping the festival of Ceres and Proserpina. Finally, as he draws to the end, he returns to his starting-point, and thus simultaneously dismisses his poem and the votive procession :

Time, mar not his success ! with welcome sweet
 Agesias' choral pomp his liberal smile shall greet.
 Lo from Arcadia's parent seat,
 Her old Stymphalian walls, they come,
 From fields with flocks o'erspread, to meet
 Sicilia's strains, from home to home.
 O'er the swift prow, when night-storms lour,
 Two anchors oft 'tis well to cast—
 Heaven on them both its blessings pour,
 And bid their glories last.
 Lord of the main ! direct aright,
 With toils unvex'd their prosperous way ;
 Spouse of the golden-wanded Amphitrite,
 With lovelier hues enrich the flowers that crown
 my lay.²

In this final strophe the familiar sea-faring proverb covertly, and the prayer to Neptune plainly indicate that the poet is dealing with a chorus that is voyaging by sea. I was led to enlarge more fully on this subject, because this Ode has exercised, in no small degree, the critical powers of scholars : if, however, viewed on these principles, which assume it framed for a procession intended to voyage by sea, the inter-connexion of its parts will be found, I think, much more appropriate and artistic.

¹ Ibid.² Ibid.

But it would be inexcusable, when treating of triumphal choruses, did I not illustrate a few of the ways in which this theme is dignified and adorned by our poet. Such circumstances, for instance, as that Gods or Goddesses, guardians of cities, are enrolled in the ranks of the revellers : or that the very regions passed through, the harbours, the towns, and the rivers, are vividly presented
505 before our eyes.

As for the Goddesses, there is a goodly company : for instance, the Graces are summoned to swell the triumph at Orchomenus :

August Aglaïa, blithe Euphrosynè,
Daughters of Heaven's resistless king,
And thou, that lovest the liquid lay,
Thalia, hear my call, and see
The choiring minstrels on their way,
By favouring fortune wooed,
With festive steps advancing : I to sing
Asopichus in Lydian mood
And laboured measures come :
For Minya from th' Olympian shrine
Bright victory bears thy gift divine.¹

Again, a company of tutelary Nymphs attends a Theban victor :

Daughter of Cadmus, Semele,
That dwell'st in heaven the Olympian queens among,
And thou that in the chambers of the sea
Sleep'st, Ino, with the Nereids haste along,
Join'd with the hero-teeming dame that bare
Great Hercules, to Melia's golden shrine,
Glittering with tripods rare,
By Loxias honour'd most, his treasury divine.
That seat of truth oracular
He gave his loved Ismenian name to grace ;
Thither, ye children of Harmonia fair,
He calls your native choir and heroine race

¹ *Olymp.* xii. (xiv), 19 (13) (Moore).

Of ancient Themis, in becoming strain,
 To sing, when Eve hath her dun sail unfurl'd,
 And Pytho's sacred plain,
 And Delphi's warning cell, the centre of the world.
 So shall your grateful transports hail
 Seven-portall'd Thebes and Cirrha's vale.¹

I pass to instances where the regions themselves in which the processions took place are exquisitely painted ; in these a complete picture is often summoned before us by a single word. Thus he describes :

Great Syracuse, the splendid shrine
 Of battle-breathing Mars.²

A city which, indeed, under Hiero's rule both by reason of its extent and a certain martial glamour, profoundly impressed, it is said, strangers from other lands. Cyrene is lauded as :

The town for chariots famed on Libya's glittering mound.³

The royal monuments of Battus, too, near that city, are 506 recounted with that detailed care which unmistakably declares the eye-witness :

For the gods
 High groves he raised, their dark abodes :
 He the Scyrotan to Apollo's shrine,
 Where the full pomp with prancing steed
 Imploring blessings might proceed,
 His spacious causeway plann'd. The Forum nigh,
 Aloof the vulgar tombs his reliques lie.⁴

The local position and rising walls of Camarina, a colony not long founded, are depicted with an extraordinary vividness :

Returned from that delightful plain
 Oenomaus' once and Pelops' reign,

¹ *Pyth.* xi. 1 (Moore).

² *Pyth.* ii. 1 (Moore).

³ *Pyth.* iv. 14 (Moore).

⁴ *Pyth.* v. 120 (84) (Moore).

Minerva's shrine, whose fostering power
 Guards his young state, he hallows now
 Oänus' stream and many a bower
 That shades the glittering lake below ;
 Hallows the banks and solemn cliffs,
 Where Hipparis' wholesome waters rove,
 Laving his peopled realm. He lifts
 The pillar'd pile, the marble grove,
 Whereon his princely chambers rise
 In swelling domes, that crown the skies.¹

And lastly, in one Ode Pindar represents the victor as being escorted to his native Thebes, just at the time when the festal day in honour of Hercules was being celebrated : hence we have a clear account of the religious ceremonial at night, the torches, the altars, the incense-clouds, peculiar to the god : you cannot doubt that the service was taking place as the joyous procession returned from the Isthmus and at nightfall entered the Theban gates :

For him, o'er famed Electra's gate,
 We Thebans still the feast prepare,
 And with fresh flow'rets consecrate
 The new-built altars blazing there ;—
 Blazing with offerings to the spirits brave
 Of his eight sons from blooming Megara born ;
 To them, from eve to radiant morn,
 Through the long night continuous wave
 The reddening flames, and toss on high
 Their fuming fragrance to the sky.²

I have, as already hinted, singled out these few examples from many available, to show how important were these honoured and hallowed assemblies, both in Pindar's own esteem and that of those whose deeds he sung. And what shall we say of the fact that at times he eulogizes poetry and the poet's inspiration ? Some may say ' he was somewhat of a braggart, and too loud (as is often the case) 507 in the praise of his own profession.' But (I should answer)

¹ *Olymp.* v. 20 (9) (Moore).

² *Isthm.* iv. 106 (79) (Moore).

there is nothing so appropriate to the spirit and temper of an athlete as such a theme. Assuredly the 'goodwill and honouring speech of mighty bards',¹ as a familiar poet declares, have ever been the peculiar and distinguishing reward of the soldier and of the victor in warlike tourney. And, not to digress into the well-worn commonplaces of a debating society, as to the free range of the Muse, neither confined to any region nor affected by length of time: it seems to me that this warlike and athletic spirit has not a little in common with lyric and especially Pindaric verse. Strong men delight in forceful speech: soldiers relish a speaker delivering himself a little unreservedly: they delight in the freedom, not to say the audacity, in which lyric poets more than any others indulge, their one aim seeming to be to find some adequate expression for the feelings of the moment. And thus, I fancy, our author, in permitting himself a humorous arrogance, by no means displeased his Therons and Chromiuses, expert critics of the stadium and wrestling-school.

And I am inclined to think that he nowhere shows his delicate insight so conspicuously, as in the way in which, while glorifying his own task, he makes it always second to the glory of those whose deeds he had to celebrate. There is the Ode in which Chromius of Aetna is conducted from Nemea in the flush of triumph: an Ode which not a little resembles in tone that poetry which was the ornament of a later, post-Roman, heroic age:

The shaft of truth I throw,
And boundless is my theme.
In the porch of Chromius' hall
Honour'd I stand, warbling th' applausive lay,
And at his bounteous call
Share the rich banquet. Many a festive day
That board the welcome stranger knows:
His virtues mar the slanders of his foes,

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¹ Hor. *Odes*, iv. 8. 27.

And quench like flood the flame.
 Various arts mankind delight ;
 But he that tempts the field of Fame
 Must march with Nature to the fight.
 Strength its might by action shows ;
 The mind by thought and sure sagacity ;
 As heaven each gift bestows.¹

In that last line he hints, unless I am mistaken, at the truth which was a favourite one with him, that Virtue is given at birth, not acquired by learning :

From Nature all perfections flow ;
 And though from task'd attention slow
 Taught excellence will sometimes strain
 And struggle to renown ; if Heaven
 Has not th' inspiring impulse given,
 'Tis silence best rewards the pain.²

This is more than once insisted upon, by means of a well-known comparison :

Genius his stores from nature draws ;
 In words not wit the learned shine ; ** it's taught*
used to be hitting
acetylides
is uncle,
onides
 Clamorous in vain, like croaking daws,
 They rail against the bird of Jove divine.³
 Elsewhere, again, he is still more explicit and more distinctly true to Nature :

But through the skies
 Swiftest of fowl the eagle flies ;
 Lured from afar he sails away,
 And pounces on his mangled prey ;
 While with hoarse croak and timorous flight
 The inglorious jackdaw courts the ground.⁴

The whole point of all the instances of this kind is to show that the poet is not only boasting of his own gift, but calling the victorious athlete to share his fame. Take the opening of the Ode in honour of Pytheas : who, it is

¹ *Nem.* i. 26 (18) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* ix. 151 (100) (Moore).

³ *Olymp.* ii. 155 (86) (Moore).

⁴ *Nem.* iii. 140 (80) (Moore).

said, had some misgivings regarding the cost of these panegyrics, arguing that with the like amount of money he might have reared a gilded statue for himself. But hear Pindar :

I am no sculptor to display
Statues of silent stone, that in one place
Stand motionless upon their idle base,
Unknown. Speed thou, my dulcet lay,
In every bark and pinnacle o'er the deep,
From loud Aegina's echoing steep,
Spreading this tale the world around—
How Lampon's valiant son,
Pytheas, with wreath Pancratian crown'd,
In Nemea's grove the palm of strength has won.¹

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And elsewhere he asseverates that his Odes would be known in all ages, just as he here speaks of all lands :

Her everlasting word survives
The doer and the deed,
When graceful genius largely gives
From wisdom's deepest fount the living meed.²

In two or three words he has sketched the real task of those who give themselves to poetic composition. To begin with,

When graceful genius largely gives,
—this implies that it is almost by chance, but chance guided by the Gods, that words, phrases, and skilful periods suggest themselves at the fitting moment to the poet's mind. And then by some subtle association, when once the right expression has been found, there often follows a rich flow, not merely of language, but of thought drawn from the deepest fountains of the heart :

From wisdom's deepest fount the living meed.

Assuredly, Pindar exactly hit the mark when he chanced upon this definition of poetry.

¹ *Nem.* v. 1 (Moore).

² *Nem.* iv. 11 (6) (Moore).

There remain, too, passages where he briefly but acutely points out that he is dealing with those who value most the honour conferred on them by poets. Let them mark the retribution, perhaps most bitter of all, which overtakes Phalaris :

Still Croesus lives for kindness blest :
 On Phalaris, whose remorseless reign
 The bull and torturing fire
 Upheld, the curses of all ages rest :
 Him nor the festive band, nor cheering lyre,
 Nor youths in sweet communion joined
 With fond remembrance hail !¹

'The festive band,' playing beneath the roof (*ὑπωροφίαι*), all but brings before our eyes the victor's hall, the accustomed banquet, the band of harpists on their elevated dais. What shall we say, moreover, of the commendation which
 510 he adds in the Pythian Ode in honour of Thrasybulus ? He declares that a rich store of song which no untoward fate can destroy is treasured for his city and house in the very temple of Apollo :

Where for th'Emmenian tribe renown'd,
 And watery Agrigent, and great
 Xenocrates with Pythian conquest crown'd,
 Apollo's proud retreat
 Enshrines, its golden stores among,
 The treasure of our rich triumphal song.
 Song, that nor wintry shower nor driving hail,
 Keen squadrons of the pitiless thunder-cloud,
 Nor weltering sands shall beat, nor sweeping gale
 Sink in the caverns of th' all-whelming flood.²

These lines seem, if I may be allowed a conjecture, to suggest a reference to some catastrophe, which the leading men of Agrigentum had experienced about that time, due to violence of wind or water : such as we read frequently occurred on the coast of Sicily. At any rate, we

¹ *Pyth.* i. 184 (94) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* vi. 5 (Moore).

infer that Pindar on more than one occasion, touched distantly (as became his good sense) upon events which had happened in his neighbourhood, or which he perhaps himself had witnessed : especially if they involved anything too invidious or painful to be noticed, without unpleasantness, in express terms. For instance, when offering congratulations to Cleander on a victory won while he was in mourning, he says :

From huge disasters free, no more
Its wreath the champion's front shall lack,
Past ill 'tis folly to deplore.¹

For 'lacking the wreath' he uses the word 'bereavement' (*ὀρφανία*), which indirectly recalls his loss. But to resume.

We have thus dealt both with the banquetings of the athletes and the glorification of poets. And Pindar's quality and disposition, in either case, have been seen to be in thorough sympathy with the tastes and proclivities of athletes. To which, perhaps, may not inappropriately be added his frequent dwelling upon the personal beauty of 511 those whose victories he celebrated :

If then with manliest beauty graced,
And rich in deeds that form to suit,
The son of Aristophanes hath placed
On glory's loftiest peak his daring foot,
There must he pause.²

And he finely depicts Arcesilas, not simply as beautiful, but as endowed with a form and grace which eminently became a cultivated youth of royal blood :

First as thou art the sceptred lord
Of mighty realms, and bear'st combined
By Nature for that proud reward,
The ruler's eye, the sage's mind.³

He praises him, you see, exactly as soldiers and cam-

¹ *Isthm.* vii. 11 (Moore).

² *Nem.* iii. 31 (19) (Moore).

³ *Pyth.* v. 19 (14) (Moore).

paigners would have done. And it would have been strange indeed, had he not, sometimes, crowned this praise by assurances of approval won from the maidens who looked on:

When by Peneus' echoing shore
 The tribe of Ephyré shall throng
 These dulcet notes to pour ;
 Hippocleas' self shall brighten from the song,
 Take, while fresh crowns his temples grace,
 Amongst his peers the worthiest place,
 Win e'en the slow respect of age,
 And warm the virgin breast with soft desire.¹

Here it is put rather simply : but in another Ode the same idea is expressed more fully and with most charming vividness :

Of't at the great Pentathlian feast
 The fair beheld thee crown'd with victory ;
 And each her wish in silence gave
 That Telesicrates the brave
 Were but her darling son, or noble spouse might be.²

Another quality, too, is noticeable, highly consistent with the athletic character ; he gives no small meed of praise to open-handed liberality, almost bordering on extravagance. Thus, with considerable freedom, he pleads with Hiero :

Thousands observe thy sovereignty ;
 A thousand listening ears bear witness to thy shame.
 512 If yet Fame's dulcet voice to hear
 Thou long'st, still crown'd to stand at Virtue's
 post,
 Oh ! shrink not from the worthless cost ;
 But, like a brave and liberal captain, spare
 Thy spreading canvas to the wind.³

And observe in passing that, in these lines, as throughout the whole Ode, he has in mind the things of the sea, and

¹ *Pyth.* x. (85) 55 (Moore).

² *Pyth.* ix. 171 (96) (Moore).

³ *Pyth.* i. 173 (88) (Moore).

such similes and images as are wont to occur to sailors : not inaptly, whether he wished to please the Syracusans, a people highly devoted to the sea, or because, as already noticed, this procession was intended to proceed to the victor's home across the Ionian Sea.

In connexion with such open-handed profusion, special and peculiar praise is given to hospitality, to the open house whose doors are shut to none. Thus referring to Xenocrates :

At his board
Ceased not the fresh convivial gale
To fill the banquet's swelling sail ;
His bounty's voyage, as the summer's smile
Or wintry gloom prevail'd, was Phasis or the Nile.¹

In conclusion, I will submit a few examples which, though by no means seeming to have been deliberately intended by the author for the glorification of the athletic life, yet plainly evince a disposition which had long and deeply loved such pursuits. Under this head, perhaps, may be cited the well-known panegyric on the city of Corinth, in which he skilfully blends her prowess at Olympia with her devotion to those pursuits which specially tend not only to refinement of life but to the safety and well-being of the state itself as well :

Sons of the famed Aletes, round your brows
Oft have the blooming Hours display'd
At sacred game in Glory's field
Triumphant Virtue's noblest braid ;
Oft to your throbbing hearts by hints reveal'd
Discoveries old of Wisdom's ways,
And works still pregnant with th' inventor's praise.²

As if, indeed, a victory once and again achieved in wrestling or boxing was of such high importance that it might fairly be reckoned among the chief glories of a city like Corinth, great as she was.

¹ *Isthm.* ii. 56 (39) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* xiii. 17 (14) (Moore).

513 Furthermore, it may fairly be contended that the thought of the 'right moment for action' (*καῖρος*), on which Pindar is constantly laying such stress, came so often to his mind, simply because the whole fate of competition depends on its being grasped or let pass. If we keep this idea before us, perhaps we shall better understand such sentences as these, which he repeats again and again :

Wouldst thou foil the censurer's sneer,
Thy copious theme in narrowest pale
Confine : nor pall th' impatient ear
That throbs for fresh delights and loathes the lengthen-
ing tale.¹

Or these :

Boundless is virtue's praise : yet he that woos
The wise, with sparing blazon will supply
The abundant theme, while opportunity
That perfects all things curbs the excursive Muse.²

But why dwell longer on a position sufficiently obvious and indeed recognized ? Let me, however, in dismissing the subject, submit those most sweetly tender lines describing a victor's father as being roused from his sleep in the shades below, lest the palm, just won, might lack the recognition most longed for and best prized of all :

Go now, sweet Echo of my lyre,
To pale Proserpine's melancholy dome
With thy proud tidings to the Sire ;
Tell Cleodamus, that his youthful son
In Pisa's glorious vale the braid
From Jove's illustrious games hath won
And twined the plumes of conquest round his head.³

I would indeed, even on the strength of this single example, take upon me to maintain that human affection of every kind may be joined, fitly and congruously, with this one subject alone, I mean the deeds of athletes : and that

¹ *Pyth.* i. 156 (81) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* ix. 133 (76) (Moore).

³ *Olymp.* xiv. 28 (20) (Moore).

this subject is not unworthy to be looked upon as the fountain-head of all Pindar's poetry. But we shall be in a position to pronounce more decisively on this question after I have concluded the next division of my subject. In that I shall explain the true function which is performed by a lyric poet, and notably by Pindar, when he either ⁵¹⁴ tries to cheer and brighten the hearts of sorrowing mortals, or offers counsel to kings or to his friends on political or religious matters.

Numerous passages considered which show Pindar to have been of a joyous and buoyant disposition : this is specially illustrated by the delight he takes in reverting to his native Thebes and all things associated with his boyhood.

EVERY one, I suppose, has heard of the controversy of Zeno, the chief of the Stoic school, with a rival philosopher : when the latter denied the existence of motion, Zeno, as we read, made no verbal reply, but merely walked once or twice up and down the portico where they chanced to be ; and thus by walking, not by arguing, he triumphantly demonstrated that there was such a thing as motion. Now, what if I should prove by a somewhat similar method, that Pindar's rich poetic vein—and certainly none other was ever richer—might be traced entirely to a love of the games and of the gymnasium ? I supported this view, you remember, quite recently by many probable inferences : now I should like to complete the argument by quoting the example of the noblest of all poets in our own day, Walter Scott—Scott by name and Scot by country—one whom I can never mention without reverence. The history of his whole life has now been revealed, as fully as on a votive tablet (to use Horace's phrase),¹ a fact which is very rare, if not unique, in the case of poets : and I have not been able to refrain from carefully examining it to see whether
 516 we may not discover something which may either weaken or strengthen my view as to the essence of the poetic gift. There are, indeed, many things which fall in with my views, but the most striking of all is the fact that this illustrious light of Poetry was first kindled by a love of sport.¹ For when, as a boy, being in delicate health, he

¹ Cf. *Hor. Sat.* ii. 1. 33.

was sent into the country among his ancestral mountains, and began to lead an open-air life, there forthwith was stimulated within him an extraordinary interest and love for that past age, of which poets had sung, in which his fathers had lived: all around him glowed with memories of the past heroes of a warlike and indomitable clan. But, I apprehend, the main thing which woke up in his mind the shadow and image of that bygone time was the country sports and pastimes, and the chase in its varied forms: for we know that, for Scott, all such pursuits as these had a powerful charm. In short, the part played in Pindar's poetical development by the Pythian and Olympic assemblages: in Spenser's and his contemporaries by martial and knightly tourneys which still kept alive the lingering memories of the so-called Middle Age: this was in Scott's case played by country life, by dogs and horses—and the hunter's cry 'repeated by the assenting groves.'² All had this common characteristic, that they fastened on the circumstances in which they were placed, as images and suggestions of bygone times and departed heroes. This is what was in my mind when I hinted that the history of the great poet might be of no less value in coming to a decision concerning the genuine fount of Pindar's poetry than was Zeno's marching up and down his porch in the controversy about the existence of motion.

Consequently, I approach with increased confidence to-day's subject, in which I hope to make clear that this fascination for athletic and gymnastic pursuits which took such strong possession of Pindar was subtly blended with his other interests, so that it need not seem incredible 517 that such almost boyish beginnings should serve as a stepping-stone to high and sacred themes. But I am far from denying that with Pindar an eager, buoyant joyousness was for the most part the dominant note. As far as I know,

¹ Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, i. 18.

² *Georgics*, iii. 45.

there has never been any famous poet who has less borne out the well-known opinion of Aristotle that 'all men of genius are naturally melancholic'.¹ For whenever he is led to those commonplaces, in which all men, to say nothing of poets, are wont sometimes to indulge, as to the brevity and fragility of our existence, the wretched and painful plight of mortal man, the doubtful duties, the trivial cares of man: at once the sorrowful strains are held back and curbed, as if his voice was ill suited to mourning, and at once he turns to some thought which may bring comfort and relief:

Yet ah! how short the vernal hour

Allow'd for mortal bliss to blow!

Fate from the stem soon shakes the fluttering flower,
That droops and dies below.

Child of a day, what's man? what is he not?

His life a shadow's dream!²

So far you have a dirge, worthy of Aeschylus or any other poet who in gloomy tone has lamented over the ills of life. But observe how the verse proceeds:

Yet when from Jove

The gladdening gleam appears,

Then bright and brilliant is his lot,

And calms unclouded gild his years.

Unlike Aeschylus, he speaks in no dark and uncertain tone; on the mere mention of the divine name, he finds peace in the sure and certain hope of better things.

And this hope, as he impresses on us in another Ode, not even death extinguishes. Wretched men, indeed, complain that what is once done can never be cancelled and made null:

Virtue's achievement, Folly's crime,

Whate'er of guilt or good the past has known,

Not e'en the Sire of all things, mighty Time,

Hath power to change, or make the deed undone.³

¹ *Probl.* 30.

² *Pyth.* viii. 131 (92) (Moore).

³ *Olymp.* ii. 29 (15) (Moore).

But yet, Pindar replies :

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But, when the prosperous hour returns,
O'er woes long wept Oblivion softly lays
Her shadowy veil : and from the heart that mourns,
By goodlier joys subdued, th' inveterate bane decays.¹

And he goes on to strengthen belief in such Divine Providence by instancing the ultimate good fortune of the Nymphs, daughters of Cadmus : yet their happiness lay entirely in Elysium, beyond the present life.

I am not sure whether I ought properly to include among these illustrations the case in which, after narrating the unfortunate fate of Neoptolemus, who was murdered close by the altar of Apollo at Delphi, he hastens to palliate, in some measure, the ill-omened deed, and, as we may say, to absolve the gods from blame. He certainly pleads in its defence a decree of fate :

Yet thus the debt of destiny he paid.
Fate had required that of the Aeacian race,
Within that ancient grove for ever laid,
Fast by the gorgeous fane, a king should rest :
Whose hallowed shade with vigil pure,
When fuming offerings heap'd th' heroic feast,
The pompous ritual might secure.
A word his rare desert rewards ;
True to the trust the rites he guards,
And fearless thus shall vouch.²

It may well be, I allow, that this version was intended to soothe the susceptibilities of the Aeginetans, who might resent what he had narrated of Neoptolemus. Nevertheless, I often wonder whether such a plea would ever have occurred to any one except to one who was naturally prone to put the best interpretation on all facts, and who would never allow himself to be thrown off his balance by the most trying circumstances.

¹ *Olymp.* ii. 34 (18) (Moore).

² *Nem.* vii. 65 (44) (Moore).

Consider too whether it is not the case that, all through Pindar's writings, sparks, so to say, of a buoyant and joyous disposition gleam forth: as when in beginning an Ode he sometimes plays and circles round many diverse topics:

like Matine bee
In act and guise,¹

519 as if unable to make up his mind where to settle; for instance:

Mark how the strong wave, as it sweeps along,
Rolls the wash'd pebble from the shore;
Mark how th' arrear shall vanish as we pour
Friendship's full tribute, our historic song²

—or, as when he delights in suddenly checking himself, and with a swift period rounds off a theme which he had begun at undue length:

All their glorious deeds to tell
Lyric law forbids the string:—
Time urges, and some potent spell
Lures me the new-moon sports to sing.
Quit, roving muse, the tempting tale,
And in mid sea reverse thy sail;
Transcendent thus o'er all thy foes,
Its day thy glorious orb shall close.³

There are many passages of similar tone: and if they seem somewhat vainglorious, it should be remembered that a certain youthful arrogance is closely allied to what we deem a noble spirit. But, on this head, we have previously cited examples, in that part of our subject which treated of Pindar's agreement and sympathy with the outspoken frankness of soldiers and athletes. Here I will simply note the obvious fact that Pindar made no scruple of indulging this broad freedom, not even in that splendid Ode which used to be called 'The Argonauts', and more nearly

¹ Hor. *Odes*, iv. 2. 27 (Conington).

² *Olymp.* x (xi), 14 (9) (Moore).

³ *Nem.* iv. 54 (33) (Moore).

approaches epic form than anything he left to us. But he does not hesitate unexpectedly to cut the thread even of this : merely excusing himself on the ground that it would be over long to be completely told on that occasion :

But the time urges, and 'twere long
The vulgar tedious path to tread ;
I know the readier route of song ;
And Wisdom follows where I lead.¹

A spirited and thoroughly soldierly outspokenness. Yet who would tolerate such defiance of all critical rules except in a lyric poet, and one, too, of that class which, revelling in a kind of wanton and joyous freedom, suffer themselves to be borne away wherever the spirit's impulse dictates ?

But I am far from denying that, both in this instance 520 and in many others, Pindar is influenced by some graver underlying motive, either concerning the state or the personal circumstances of those whom he celebrates. Well-qualified critics have proved before now that the ground-scheme of the work he has in hand is wonderfully kept in view, even when he appears to expatiate most widely, unrestrained by any fixed law or method. In spite of all his flights, the real spirit of the writer is discernible in the entire structure of the poem, as truly as the spirit of a man can be traced in his expression and gestures.

And then remember how sometimes he gracefully and aptly refers to things and persons immediately, perchance, before his eyes :

O Phintis

(he addresses the charioteer by name to complete the realism of his picture) :

Bring forth thy mules, O Phintis, and behind
In haste the glittering harness join,
With me thy chariot mount and find
Along yon spacious road the cradle of his line.

¹ *Pyth.* iv. 440 (247) (Moore).

Full well, I ween, th' illustrious track they know,
 Learnt from the plaudits of th' Olympian throng
 That crown'd their necks with glory. Open throw
 To their careering speed the gates of song.
 To-day we press for Pitana, and lave
 Ere night our burning team in cool Eurotas' wave.¹

A beautiful figure in itself, enriched with a spice of almost boyish exhilaration. Of diverse, yet fully equal charm, is the way in which he commends to his lord the charioteer of Arcesilaus of Cyrene as he returns home crowned with victory :

First of thy peers be great Carrhotus styled ;
 He brought not to th' applauding plain,
 Where Battus' just descendants reign,
 Excuse, repentant Epimethes' child ;
 But foremost in the chariot-course
 By pleased Castalia's sacred source
 Th' accepted stranger pass'd, and round
 Thy kingly locks his wreath of glory bound.²

521 There is a touch of amusing irony in pretending to enroll
 'Excuse' among the ranks of the Nymphs.

Just such irony is it which allows him to jest familiarly with the Muse herself, calling her 'daughter'—whom but a few lines before he had hailed as 'mother' !

No scant supply, no lingering stream
 Daughter

Pour from these lips to match my pregnant theme.³

Translators have, I confess, construed this in a wholly different sense : but why might not Pindar, now growing old, well jest familiarly even with the goddess herself, whose companion and comrade he had been for so many years ?

¹ *Olymp.* vi. 37 (22) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* v. 34 (24) (Moore).

³ *Nem.* iii. 16.

And lastly (I will add this point, though some may think it trivial), some there are whose feelings towards Pindar are such that, when trying to classify his poems and (as lovers of Poetry will) casting about for analogies, they maintain that his verse is most aptly likened to the song of the lark: since this little bird pre-eminently recalls something of the essential tone of lyric verse by its untrammelled, joyous, and perennial strain. Further, the lark is not mute even amid bare and barren fields, but soars up to the sky with joyous trill from its nest, wherever it may be: in this just like Pindar himself, who from the most straitened and (it may happen) obscure beginnings, delights to soar to lofty, noble themes. Lastly, it alone among birds is wont to sing during flight: and this recalls that special characteristic of Pindar, that he delights in the mere act of singing itself, in comparative disregard of theme and subject. Thus he takes as a starting-point anything that first offers to hand: only varying it with wondrous modulations, and consummately adapting it to time and place.

*Shelley's
skylark*

I leave to those who care for such conceits to decide ⁵²² whether this analogy is just: certainly there are many slight indications of Pindar's spirit which bear it out, where he is from time to time adding ornament and illustration to themes drawn from the gymnasium and the palaestra. In the first place, he readily turns aside to the praise of spring-time (I have already quoted an instance of this), and often, moreover, shows himself an enthusiastic lover of flowers. Thus, when he has to celebrate the happy fields in the 'Islands of the Blest' the first things which come into his mind are the flower-strewn earth and branches of the trees with their many-coloured hues:

Where sea-born breezes gently blow
O'er blooms of gold that round them glow,

Which Nature boon from stream or strand
 Or goodly tree profusely pours ;
 Whence pluck they many a fragrant band,
 And braid their locks with never-fading flowers.¹

It may well be that Pindar had chanced to hear accounts from travellers of the marvellous and splendid variety of flowers adorning, as we know, tropical regions, which are so much nearer to the sun, particularly as, in his time, those long voyages on which travellers boldly faced the perils of the sea in quest of fame began once more, as in the heroic age, to be common : and how highly Pindar rated these adventures we have proof in his oft-repeated praise of Hercules and his pillars, and in his Argonautic Ode, that splendid poem written in praise of those who spend their toil to win the glory of the sea. Indeed, there are many other instances which prove the same point.

We find him again dwelling on flowers, especially those of spring, with great show of delight, in that exquisite little legend concerning the birth of Iamus, who, as he tells us, when left by his mother amid the woods, escaped the vigilance of the king's scouts :

For he five days
 'Mong shrubs and pathless briars and rushes green
 Had lain, the dewy violet's mingled rays
 Sprinkling with purple and gold his tender frame :
 Whence fond Evadne's joy proclaimed his deathless
 name.²

523

I know nothing more lovely than this, except perhaps Spenser's soothing elegy over his lost friend Sidney : whose spirit, he maintains, cannot have perished utterly :

Ah ! no ; it is not dead, ne can it die,
 But lives for aie, in blissful Paradise :
 Where like a new-borne babe it soft doth lie,
 In bed of lillies wrapped in tender wise ;

¹ *Olymp.* ii. 130 (72) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* vi. 89 (53) (Moore).

And compast all about with roses sweet,
 And daintie violets from head to feet.
 There thousand birds, all of celestial brood,
 To him do sweetly caroll day and night :
 And with strange notes, of him well understood,
 Lull him asleep in Angelick delight ;
 Whilst in sweet dreame to him presented bee
 Immortall beauties, which no eye may see.¹

These lines of Spenser are well worthy to be placed side by side with Pindar's, in order to show the almost religious function of true Poetry : if indeed it may be said that Poetry's most essential task is to lift to a higher plane all the emotions of our minds, and to make them take their part in a diviner philosophy.

For we must not suppose it was a mere chance that so many poets combine to call upon flowers and leaves, the glory of spring, to protect sleeping infancy. For beyond the two instances just cited, we well know that the idea has commended itself to country-folk in many nations and in many ages. To this feeling we may trace Horace's account of his own childish experience :

524

O'ertired, poor child, with play and sleep,
 With living green the stock-doves crown'd—
 A legend, nay, a miracle,
 ' Bears, vipers, spared him as he lay,
 The sacred garland deck'd his hair,
 The myrtle blended with the bay :
 The child's inspired : the gods were there.²

From the same source comes our own fairy tale of the boy and girl in the wood, how, when at last worn out with hunger and wandering, the birds performed the last rites of burial with a kindly covering of leaves. But it is my deliberate opinion that underlying such fancies or such legends as these is no doubtful token of that heavenly

¹ *Clorinda*, stanzas 12 and 13. Supposed to have been written by Mary, Countess of Pembroke, sister to Sir Philip Sidney

² Hor. *Odes*, iii. 4. 11 (Conington).

no doubt (with
 assistance of
 Spenser)

Goodness, which has accorded to all men everywhere a special token of Its Presence in the world of flowers and kindly herbs. This is the truth which men of earlier days taught by fables of this kind, for they all point to this lesson, that no man can in sorrow charge God with being unjust or hostile to him, so long as he has at hand but one blade of grass or one bud upon the trees.

But I perceive that in following up these reflections I have unintentionally touched upon another source and fount of Pindar's poetry—I mean his delight in any mention of boyish sports and of all that has to do with boyhood. This, too, well accords with the simple kindliness of the man and his optimistic spirit. But concerning the child Iamus no more need be added to what has been already said. Not even a mother herself could ever give utterance to anything more tender or true to nature than that phrase,
 525 'sprinkling his tender frame.' So rich is its grace and beauty that nothing in the world could more fitly suggest that more than mother's care with which a loving Supreme Power guards and tends holy souls after death. And this is the lesson which Spenser learnt, as we have seen, from it.

The story of Hercules, too, is highly Pindaric, where he pictures the serpents strangled by the new-born infant, as he lies crying in his cradle: there is a marvellous blending of godlike strength with a child's fearlessness:

Through the wide gates with many a fold
 They to the dark and spacious chamber roll'd,
 Their jaws with slaver smear'd,
 Ravening for their infant prey:
 Stirr'd at the sound, his front he rear'd,
 And roused him for the maiden fray.
 Round their necks in durance sure
 With gripe inevitable his hands he clasp'd;
 Till time their sprites impure
 Press'd from the strangled monsters as he grasp'd¹

¹ *Nem.* i. 61 (41) (Moore).

Nothing, one would think, could be imagined more widely remote from the description of Iamus' tenderest and most fragile infancy : yet these lines, too, subtly savour of a boy or of one used to play with boys.

Finally, that no time of life may be left without illustration, let us see whether with equal insight he has touched the habits and feelings of those a little older : and let us take the poem which sets forth the youthful days of Achilles, brought up under Chiron's guardianship amid the woodlands, and occupied with hunting and field pursuits :

Mark how the part divine Achilles play'd !
 While Philyra yet with a watchful eye
 O'erlook'd his home-kept infancy,
 E'en then men's feats his childish sports he made.
 Poising with infant hand the barbed lance,
 Full oft the lion's wrathful might,
 Swift as the wind, he match'd in fight ;
 Oft faced the bristling boar's advance,
 And at old Chiron's feet exulting laid,
 Scarce six years born, his panting prey.
 Thence on his youth the Delian maid,
 The stern Minerva, smil'd, and cheer'd his wondrous way.¹

Are we not fully justified in concluding that Pindar 526 knew equally well the tastes and interests of beardless youths, as they lead cheerful lives in the open air and eagerly seek out for themselves everywhere imitations and mimicries of the hunter's skill ?

In this respect it may be noticed, however, that there is a considerable contrast between Pindar and Aeschylus. Aeschylus, in the main, as being a disciple of Pythagoras, not only extends his sympathy to animals offered as sacrificial victims, but even to the whole race of wild creatures and such game as men are wont to chase, whether for food or by way of sport : but, as far as I know, no such

¹ *Nem.* iii. 75 (43) (Moore).

thought ever occurred to Pindar. This trait, in itself, marks him as one of those poets who, even within the sphere of Poetry, keep their sympathy with the mass of mankind; who delight to view things gaily and light-heartedly, rather than gravely; in short, who show themselves more like Homer than Virgil: for, unless I mistake, this pair of great writers represents two great types, and we may class every poet, in whatever matter we have to judge him, as falling under one or other of these types.

I pass now to consider the points which show Pindar's enthusiasm for his own native Thebes or for the general concerns of Greece; and although such a feeling is far from being limited to the Pindaric class now under review, poets, namely, of buoyant and active disposition (for all men without exception, not poets merely, share the common love for country, and reverence for ancestral law and custom), nevertheless, so I at least conceive, we may find in it too some clue to Pindar's disposition and temper. The truth is that the state of Thebes, at that time, was looked on with some disfavour, because it had withheld its support from Greece at a critical period—indeed, had
 527 even assisted the Persians. Pindar, however, was wholeheartedly on the side of Greece: as, first of all, I show from his own express words:

O grieve not at th' abortive wrong;

The toil hath ceased, the fight is won.

Spread far and wide the joyful strain—

For lo! the ponderous stone

Of Tantalus, that o'er us threatening hung,

Some god hath heaved aside, and Greece revives again.

Intolerable weight! till dread dismay

Thus by celestial aid dispell'd,

My soul's o'erwhelming care had quell'd:

But to the business of the present day,

Man's best employ—for time unseen

Hangs o'er us with his shadowy thong,

Urging life's stealthy steeds along.

Yet well brave hearts, I ween,
 Wounds deep as ours, with freedom blest,
 May bear, and for success to come
 On hope's assurance rest.¹

These lines give no obscure hint of the writer's own leanings in the politics of his time. It is obvious that he rejoiced in the triumph of his country so heartily and sincerely, that his mind turns back to the thought of that triumph as the surest source of reassurance in a troublous time. More than this, he declares, if I read him aright, that he not only shares in the present rejoicing, but will always cling to the belief that no man, so long as his freedom be secure, can ever be utterly cast down.

And then his praises of Hiero himself, whom it was his special delight to honour, are associated with tributes to Athens and Sparta, though these have no obvious relation to his subject :

Bid, son of Saturn, the Phoenicians' rage
 In calm domestic arts subside,
 Yon Tuscan rout remember in retreat
 Their comrade's groans on Cumae's tide,
 With tarnish'd ensigns strew'd and foundering fleet.
 Such was the wild promiscuous wreck
 Wrought by the Syracusian stroke,
 Whose captain from the towering deck
 Dash'd to the deep their vanquish'd throng,
 And knapp'd in twain the barbarous yoke.
 When Athens asks my praise,
 From Salamis I'll date the swelling song ;
 Cithaeron's field the Spartan's fame shall raise,
 Where Persia's boasted archery fell :
 But when, Dinomenes, the lyre
 Thy conquering sons inspire,
 Oh, then, from Himera's banks the glittering bough
 I'll pluck to plant on Virtue's brow,
 And bid those echoing shores their foe's disasters tell.²

¹ *Isthm.* viii. 17 (9) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* i. 136 (71) (Moore).

528 Do you think that he did not look favourably on Salamis and Plataea, who held that any great and splendid deed might be appraised by the standard of those two battles?

But it may be urged that he never celebrated those victories, whose praise you would expect at that time from a writer to whom the common security of Greece was of utmost concern and importance: and further—and this is more surprising—that he never indulges in bitter reproach against Thebes, never denounces it as a mean and unworthy thing, that it separated its cause from the cause of Greece, and that his own fellow countrymen sympathized with foreign tyrants. That could not be said of him which Horace says of Alcaeus:

But when the song
Of combat tells and tyrants fled,
Keen ears, press'd shoulders, closer throng.¹

Grant that all this is true, yet there is nothing (believe me) in it, which militates against what has been said. It is natural to a buoyant and joyous temperament, such as Pindar's was, not to let anything depress it very greatly, not even the discredit and humiliation of his country: in the same way our own great poet, whose poetry we said just now might be compared with Pindar's, when he observed the political party, to which he was ardently devoted, daily losing influence and power, yet never once touched on the theme in his poems, either in indignation or regret. He betook himself to the one resource open to him, to the memories of the past and the records of heroic deeds as a safe haven in which he could find rest, when beaten and buffeted by the blasts of modern politics. Why may not Pindar, though disapproving the policy of his native state, have yet taken joy and delight in the city

¹ Hor. *Odes*, ii. 13. 31 (Conington).

Scott

itself, its surrounding scenes, its religious belief and observances, and all the monuments of its bygone heroes?

On this subject, the highest place must be assigned to that most beautiful lament on the Theban army overthrown near Oenophyta : with regard to which it should be noticed, as we frequently find in Pindar's poems, that the chief merit of it lies in the thread which runs through the whole and in the general style of the poem, so admirably calculated to give solace, not so much, indeed, to his fellow citizens as to the poet himself. Do not suppose, however, that the force and charm of this consummate art can be fairly appreciated by any one who only hears one or two small extracts ; those who would form a proper judgement of it must read and re-read it carefully. But even with the great drawback of this limitation, we cannot help seeing the man's reverent, kindly, zealous affection for his native city : he begins by tacitly diverting attention from the disquieting circumstances of the time to the glories and nobility of a bygone age :

B.C. 456
by Athenians

529

For which of all thy sons renown'd of yore,
Fortunate Thebes, most swell'd thy patriot pride ? ¹

Then he almost dazzles our eyes with the long and illustrious line of heroes, whom one after another the splendid city had reared ; and purposely he winds up the list with an allusion to the alliance which Thebes once had maintained with the Peloponnesus :

Or when thy colonies, with Dorian shoot
Ingrafted, raised on Spartan root
Their vigorous branches : and the Pythian powers
Sent Aegeus' sons, thy warlike race,
Amyclae's plunder'd walls to sway.²

Where his meaning is, I apprehend, that the policy which his contemporaries had lately adopted on like occasion

¹ *Isthm.* vi (vii), 1 (Moore).

² *Isthm.* vi (vii), 19 (13) (Moore).

had been thoroughly endorsed and approved by the shades of their ancestors. Could he offer a more potent solace than this to men's spirits, shaken and discouraged by their recent defeat and losses? Then, in the spirit of a kindly friend, he associates the praises and the strife of the fatherland with those of the victor: of Strepsiades he declares:

Lo while his name and fame his uncle shares,
 Their violet locks th' applauding Muses wave—
 Fall'n in the field of brazen-shielded Mars,
 For honour is the guerdon of the brave.¹

530 Next, in the vein of Homer or Tyrtaeus, he stimulates their minds to martial exploits:

Assured be he, whose generous power,
 In the fierce fight's tempestuous hour,
 Wards from his country's front away
 The furious hailstorm of the fray,
 Hurling retorted vengeance on the foe,
 That fame his life shall crown, and largely grace
 Beyond the grave his honoured race.
 Son of Diodotus, now liest thou low,
 Rival in war's destructive game
 Of Meleager, and the dread
 Amphiareus, and Hector's fame!
 In youth's fair prime thy lofty spirit fled.
 'Twas in the flight's first rank, where round thee cast
 Their desperate stand thy bravest comrades made.

Finally (and it was this passage which chiefly induced me to dwell at some length upon the Ode) he expressly states that he himself suffers with the suffering of his friend and of his country, and yet that he has a sure and certain hope that he shall keep a brave and tranquil heart:

Much hath thy fate perplex'd me!—but 'tis past—
 Neptune with gracious hand the storm hath laid,
 And all is calm again. I'll fling
 Braids round the victor's brows and sing.

¹ *Isthm.* vi (vii), 31 (23) (Moore).

Quench not, kind heav'n, the minstrel's fire ;
 Grudge not the raptures of the lyre !
 'Tis but the moment's ecstasy, which I,
 Well pleased, in peace indulge, till age and death
 Shall come, as come they must—for all shall die,
 Though fates unequal close our days beneath.
 Man is too brief long aims to reach.¹

In conclusion, after a passing reference to the story of Bellerophon, he briefly recalls the song to his friend the victor, whom he was celebrating on that occasion :

O Loxias, whose unclouded brow
 Beams with the golden locks of day,
 Grant us thine own great games to know,
 And bind our temples with thy Pythian bay.²

You can recognize in our poet Cicero's description of ' the gentle and refined old man ',³ who is wont, so far as he is himself concerned, to contemplate the play of Fortune with untroubled spirit ; who entertains no lofty, no magnificent ambitions ; and yet looks with no unkindly eyes on the 531 struggles and the enthusiasms of youth.

Perhaps I have dwelt over long on this Ode : but it seemed not beside the point to demonstrate, if possible, by one striking example, that, with Pindar, both public joys and public sorrows are tempered, in the highest degree possible, by his gentle and equable disposition—and this all the more as he advanced in years.

Let us now consider other characteristics which testify Pindar's affection for his native Thebes. Does he not, then, exhibit keen pleasure, on occasion, in summoning the choruses of native nymphs to lead the triumphal processions along the banks of Boeotia's streams ?—

Daughter of Cadmus, Semelé,
 That dwell'st in heaven the Olympian queens among,
 And thou that in the chambers of the sea
 Sleep'st, Ino, with the Nereids haste along,

¹ *Isthm.* vi (vii), 51 (37) (Moore).

² *Isthm.* vi (vii), 70 (49) (Moore).

³ *De Senect.* ix. 28.

Join'd with the hero-teeming dame that bare
 Great Hercules, to Melia's golden shrine,
 Glittering with tripods rare,
 By Loxias honour'd most, his treasury divine :
 That seat of truth oracular
 He gave his loved Ismenian name to grace ;
 Thither, ye children of Harmonia fair,
 He calls your native choir and heroine race
 Of ancient Themis, in becoming strain,
 To sing, when Eve hath her dun sail unfurl'd,
 And Pytho's sacred plain
 And Delphi's warning cell, the centre of the world.
 So shall your grateful transports hail
 Seven-portall'd Thebes and Cirrha's vale.¹

And does he not imply that the victors he celebrates are gratified by the mere name of the fountain of Dirce, as if it had a magic charm of its own ?—

For them from Dirce's fount, the living spring
 Which golden-vested Memory's daughters bring,
 I'll pour, where Cadmus' wall its towering port unfolds.²

And in another Ode he is yet bolder :

Cold is the tardy tongue that will not move—
 Not burn for Hercules to sing,
 Nor that beloved Dircæan spring
 Remember, from whose bubbling stream,
 With Iphicles, he drank. For vows
 With many a trophy crown'd, to them
 The loud triumphal choir I'll rouse.
 Ye warbling Graces, on this head
 Cease not your beams of song to shed.³

532 Pindar, we may note, expresses himself as if convinced that the familiar founts and springs of each man's native place would prove to him, so to say, a fountain of poetic inspiration : a view, in my opinion, which has in it a large measure of truth. What, I would ask, more natural than

¹ *Pyth.* xi. 1 (Moore).

² *Isthm.* v (vi), 107 (74) (Moore).

³ *Pyth.* ix. 151 (87) (Moore).

that youthful minds should be subtly influenced by the very localities, hills, rivers, and windings of shore and valley, which meet their eyes in earliest infancy, and that the man's poetic gift may be traced to such sources as these? Pindar, I imagine, either believed, or at all events, vaguely felt, something like this, when he suggests that the full light of the Muse would fail him, did he ever forget the fount of Dirce.

Moreover, in sacred rite and prayer, too, whenever occasion serves, he is instant to remember his native city. Among all the deities, he unhesitatingly singles out the Great Mother, as the goddess to whom, before all others, he commends with many prayers Hiero in his sickness. And this simply, as I suspect, because a votive temple to this deity stood hard by his own house door :

But to the Matron Goddess, in whose praise
Oft near my portal at the midnight hour
With Pan their hymns the damsels pour,
For thee my distant voice I'll raise.¹

It may be questioned, moreover, if he does not celebrate the worship of the Pythian Apollo with more whole-hearted enthusiasm than those of the other deities, in whose honour splendid athletic contests were founded. I make no exception—not even the Olympic Jove. Take, for instance, the impressive lines in which he congratulates Aeacus and Aegina that Neoptolemus was entombed at Delphi within the sanctuary itself :

Still, though death's wave without distinction roll
O'er all alike, the nameless and the great,
For warriors yet, that reach th' eternal goal,
Approved of heaven, conspicuous honours wait.
Thus, when the towers of Troy, so long by Greeks
Assail'd, brave Pyrrhus to the skies
In smouldering flames had whirl'd, the grove he seeks, 533
In whose dark shades sequester'd lies

¹ *Pyth.* iii. 137 (77) (Moore).

The spacious earth's mysterious nave,
And shrines him in a Pythian grave.¹

And these lines, moreover, occur in one of the Nemean Odes : small wonder then that in the Pythian Odes themselves ' that centre of the loud-echoing earth ' is again and again honoured. I have already indicated the high veneration in which Aeschylus held it : Pindar, with equal affection, though springing from a different source, was moved to reverence not only by the divine majesty of the place itself, but by the memory of his own youth and all of strange and mysterious that he had heard about the temple and the shrine in his boyhood.

Moreover, it seems highly accordant with Pindar's notable affection for his native Thebes, that he at times spends great pains in tracing the genealogy of those who, if we may believe old traditions, were connected, however remotely, with the Theban stock : herein exhibiting just the same devotion as that Scotch Pindar to whom I have more than once referred : who shows unwearying delight in enumerating far-back ancestors of some noble house which either by birth or marriage seems to be connected with his own family. Thus Pindar implies that Stymphalus, an Arcadian city, is of interest to him, mainly because a certain Thebé was said to have been born there who was the guardian deity of Thebes :

'Twas fair Metope's love, Stymphalian spouse,
To Thebes equestrian Thebé gave :
In whose sweet fount, for warriors' brows
Weaving the various hymn, my tuneful lips I lave.²

This would seem far-fetched reasoning did not the poet take special interest and delight in such things. In another
534 place he pleases himself in extolling Cyrene, having found

¹ *Nem.* vii. 43 (30) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* vi. 142 (84) (Moore).

a clue to trace that city's origin to Thebes and thence to his own tribe :

Spartans born my favour'd sires,
 From Aegeus sprung, to Thera came :
 Fate led them to the land, whose sacred fires
 With many a victim flame.
 Thence, Phoebus, thy Carneian rites
 To proud Cyrene's mount we bore.¹

A scholar of great experience and learning² supports the view that these lines are supposed to be spoken by Pindar himself, not by the leader of the Chorus, on the simple ground that it is the quality of lyric poetry for the writer, without scruple, to allow himself and his own concerns to play due part in his poems : while in Tragedy and Epic the case is commonly just the reverse. Thus Pindar was enabled all the more freely to indulge his own feeling, as often as the mention of some locality, or the thread of his story, gave him an opportunity for introducing some reference to things with which he himself had been long and intimately familiar.

But among all examples of this kind there is none more striking than the frequent praise of Aegina, so lovingly intertwined with the honour and exaltation of Thebes : at all events, if we accept Pindar's own explanation of his enthusiasm for it, that it was only due to the fact that by tradition there had been a prehistoric bond of relationship between Thebes and Aegina :

Born in seven-portall'd Thebes, 'tis mine
 Song's sweetest flowers and freshest bloom
 For famed Aegina's brows to twine.
 She with her heroine sister brave,
 Fairest and youngest of their line,
 From old Asopus sprung, and won
 Jove's amorous grace divine.³

¹ *Pyth.* v. 96 (68) (Moore).

² Dissen.

³ *Isthm.* vii (viii), 35 (17) (Moore).

Now, as all readers who have made even the slightest acquaintance with Pindar know, he is wont to be more than ordinarily moved to the enthusiasm which is the outcome of a reverent and genuine feeling, whenever he refers to Aegina. Indeed, the two states were associated, not only by the firmest bonds of alliance, but by the ties of hospitality. And this is why Pindar, who is always most
 535 scrupulous about the duties due to guests, greets, with all his heart and more fully than he does any one else, an Aeginetan victor in a Theban contest :

For, where Amphitryon's proud remains
 Inurn'd th' illustrious tomb contains,
 Cadmean chiefs, with willing hand,
 Twined round his brows the glittering band :
 Fondly they swell'd Aegina's fame ;
 For, welcome to that wall,
 By friends received a friend he came,
 And sat in great Alcides' gorgeous hall.¹

Perhaps we may detect here some trace of private hospitality interchanged between Pindar himself and some of the leading citizens of Aegina : especially if the lines are compared with a passage occurring in another Ode, where, speaking of the house of an Aeginetan victor, Pindar commends him to the care of Hercules as being a neighbour, because his house lay between two shrines of that god in the Aeginetan city :

For as the parting pole on either hand
 Flanks the quadrigal chariot's gilded yoke,
 Between thy stately fanes his turrets stand.²

The places in Aegina are obviously quite familiar to him : perhaps, as I indeed incline to infer, he had been more than once entertained there. This being so, the reason is not far to seek why Pindar flatters the Aeginetans so far as, on one occasion at least, to assign to them the greatest share

¹ *Nem.* iv. 31 (20) (Moore).

² *Nem.* vii. 136 (93) (Moore).

of the glorious victory at Salamis : though he takes care to guard against the risk of praise likely to stir jealous envy :

Witness triumphal Salamis
By Ajax' towers encompass'd round ;
'Midst war's mad waves and angry skies,
By naval strength sustain'd, by myriads press'd,
She braved the deathful hailstorm of the fray ;
But steep'd in silence be the vaunting lay—
Jove, lord of all things, as it seems him best,
Dispenses good and ill.¹

Indeed, he confesses in express terms, that his Muse was wont to leave the theme in hand, and wander off unbidden to praise the race of Aeacus beyond all other heroes whatsoever :

Apart th' Aeacean race, my thirsty soul
Tastes not the lay.²

But no one will deny that the result was happy for the poet himself, when we recollect the wealth of splendid 536 passages in which he extols either Aeacus himself, toiling in aid of deities before the walls of Troy : or his sons, grandsons, and others of the race : such as Telamon summoned by Hercules to share his glory, or the unsullied youth and heavenly bridal of Peleus, or the boyhood of Achilles, or the splendid ritual at the burial of Neoptolemus. It may be questioned, moreover, whether it was not among his friends and hosts in Aegina, rather than at any other place, that the poet learnt to introduce the sailor's life into his poems, since he was clearly by birth a landsman. Who was it taught him to contemplate the vast sea deeps with a kind of divine exaltation, blended with awe ? Whence did he learn to describe, as on a votive tablet, the restless care, the unstable desires, the boundless hope, of sea

¹ *Isthm.* iv (v), 60 (48) (Moore).

² *Isthm.* iv (v), 24 (19) (Moore).

voyagers? In treating of either of these themes pre-eminent beyond all the rest is the Argonautic Ode :

Juno their hearts with sweet persuasive zeal
 Inspired to bound on Argo's keel,
 To court the tempting toil : that none might long
 To waste undanger'd on his mother's arm
 Youth without glory.¹

Unerringly and skilfully too, if ever poet did, he has drawn for us the picture of that strange passion for the sea, while still unseen, with which, as we know, boys and youths are often fired, as if fascinated by some fatal charm. And then he describes their emotions when they first board a ship : an unsurpassingly fine effort :

In haste

The panting band embark'd, and from below
 The lifted anchor hung upon the dancing prow.
 High on the stern a golden goblet rear'd
 The chief, and to the sire of all the gods,
 The lightning-lancèd Jove, his prayer preferr'd ;
 Invoked the powers, that sway the winds and
 floods,
 The sea's wild ways, the nights forlorn,
 And smiling days, and sweet return.
 Heaven's prompt assent in accents loud
 Spake the big thunder from the cloud,
 And playful pour'd in volleys bright
 Its fractured beams of harmless light.
 Paused those rude heroes, by that gleam divine
 537 And sound ambiguous awed—Mopsus that hail'd the
 sign
 Cheer'd to their oars the rallied crew,
 And with sweet hopes their hearts inspired :
 At their stout stroke the galley flew ;
 Toss'd from their blades the surge retired.²

The phrase 'at their stout stroke' should be specially noted : for it indicates a writer who has trusted to observation merely, without having had practical experience : while

¹ *Pyth.* iv. 327 (184) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* iv. 340 (191) (Moore).

Aeschylus, on the other hand, as we have seen, generally details sea affairs with the air of a man who had not only himself known the sea well, but with his own hands, so to speak, pulled an oar.

We have noticed the keen interest which Pindar exhibits towards Aegina, as being connected in some way with his native Thebes, and bound to himself personally, if we conjecture aright, by ties of hospitality. We intended to have next submitted a few remarks, by way of completing the subject, on his general views as to the most satisfactory form of political government. He was, undoubtedly, as one would expect in a Theban, most inclined to the side of an aristocracy: though this by no means hindered him from frequently criticizing the mistakes even of the nobles themselves. But I forbear, at present, to offer examples of this, since they will be better held over, perhaps, until we reach the conclusion of what is to be said concerning Pindar and his poetry. For I see that one of the points we took in hand still remains to be considered—the manner and spirit in which Pindar availed himself of that freedom, which the ancients for the most part accorded to poets, especially lyricists and dramatists—the freedom, I mean, and even licence, to find fault with leading men, and even kings themselves, for past deeds and warn them against future actions. In treating this division of the subject it will clearly appear that, also where he is dealing with political affairs, Pindar's youthful feelings survived even to his old age, and that his patriotism was fired not by art but by his natural instinct.

Finally, to sum up in one sentence what seems to me the main result of our present discussion. It is a great merit, I might almost call it a divine gift, when any poet is 538 seen to retain throughout life, traces of his youthful impressions and feelings: if only for this, that with the course of that impressionable time of life clearly before us

we possess, as it were, a clue whereby we may penetrate to the deepest poetry of the man. And, in this connexion, we may, I think, fitly adopt that well-known passage of Cicero, which always falls on my ear like the utterance of some sacred oracle, as if it were spoken with a more than human voice, 'For, as I like a young man in whom there is something of the old, so I like an old man in whom there is something of the young.'¹ Similarly, I would have a poet's strains distil, like a subtle aroma, the memory of his earliest years: first, because that has an inborn charm which no art can produce; it is a thing which 'I feel but want the power to paint':² and, secondly, because we may thus most surely and easily approach the very fountain-head of Poetry, and not merely follow tributary streams. Nay, more (though I speak boldly, it is not far from the truth), whenever we enjoy the study of such a one, we are contemplating the works not of this or that poet but of Nature herself, or rather of Him who created Nature.

¹ *De Senect.*, ch. ii.² *Juv.* vii. 56.

Pindar, for good and sufficient reasons, attached himself to the aristocracy : yet in spite of this he indulged in absolute frankness in expression of his political views : first, owing to his naturally independent and happy disposition : next, because it was the habit and manner of his time : thirdly, and chiefly, because he held belief in a future life and that the spirits of the happy dead witness our actions even here.

I NOW approach the last division, and that the most important, of this discussion of Pindar and his poetry. According to the plan laid out, I have now to deal with that lyric freedom and outspokenness (*παρρησία*) which he preserves, as though it were a traditional right, in most of his poems.

Now, when we really face this fact, our first thought is whether it be conceivable that the same man who, even when advanced in years, was so alert and tenacious of the memories of all that charmed him as a boy, should be capable of giving serious advice in difficult and important affairs without the least fear of kings, to say nothing of his own friends : advice, too, which he often enforces by appeal to the holiest religious sanction and to the deities of Olympus or the shades below. We may well marvel whether any method can make two such opposite qualities blend and work together as the severity of a very severe judge and a bright, happy, almost careless temperament.

But this was the very reason (for so I think we should 540 reply to those who raise a difficulty of this kind) that I conceived that it was the result of something more than human art or contrivance if any poet, like Pindar, was able, while dealing with such grave questions, to maintain this simple, native, and (to say the truth) childlike

disposition. Assuredly, a man of such mould as this must look down from a great height upon the common crowd of humanity and everywhere see :

deep, wondrous deep below,
How poor mistaken mortals wandering go.
Seeking the path to Happiness ; some aim
At Learning, Wit, Nobility, or Fame ;
Others with Cares and Dangers vex each hour
To reach the top of Wealth and sovereign Power.¹

In short, we are none of us ignorant that men of strong and noble mind have appeared in the world who have evinced in death, as well as throughout life, a buoyant gaiety, thoroughly characteristic of youth's opening years : and I cannot but conclude, when I observe and weigh such examples, that there must be some very close connexion between this gaiety and their striking courage.

And I am inclined to think that this fact is at any rate a part of what is implied in that divine saying which teaches us the pre-eminent dignity and beauty of childhood and youth : that to 'such as these' pertains the essence of all divine and heavenly knowledge—'for of such is the kingdom of God'.²

But to return to Pindar's poems : I am convinced that any one who would grasp their essential qualities should realize aright all that lies in a calm and somewhat jovial old age : in an age which, though long freed from all distraction of passion or discontent, has not yet wholly banished the sweet and pleasing recollections of youth.

541 Does not he who can sincerely deliver himself in the following lines stand fully prepared for all that may threaten him, and ready to face any adverse fortunes ?

Teach me through life truth's simple path to find,
That my sons blush not for their sire.
Some, showers of gold from heaven require,
Others for boundless plains have pined ;

¹ Lucret. ii. 10 (Creech).

² Mark x. 14.

Grant me my country's smiles to meet,
 And let these limbs the grave devour ;
 Still probity with praise I'll greet,
 Still on the knave my vengeance pour.¹

And if he seems sometimes to praise riches overmuch, yet his tone always gives the impression that he himself neither despises nor is extravagantly fond of it :

If there be one, whose wisdom crown'd
 Th' unerring paths of Truth has found,
 'Tis his with heart uplift to Heaven
 T' improve the gift its grace has given.
 The winds that sweep the vaulted sky
 Shift every hour their changeful way ;
 And when on man swelling Prosperity
 In all its fullness comes, it will not, must not stay.
 Humble in want, in greatness I'll be great,
 Still to my fortune's form I'll shape my will,
 My wit the follower of my fate.
 Should some kind god my lap with affluence fill,
 To Fame's high peak my hopes aspire.²

A true picture that of the brave man, of one 'splendidly equipped to face the assaults of fortune',³ one to whom, like an eager youth, his joyous and gay heart lends strength and courage.

Now let us see what manner of man he shows himself, when any rulers of the state stand in need of his admonitions. First, nothing can be clearer than that he strongly supported the view that the chief conduct of affairs should be left rather to the judgement of a select few of the leading citizens, than to the general decision of the people at large. Indeed, as became one who was ever faithful to his youthful memories, he remained constant throughout life to the opinions he had imbibed among the Boeotians when a boy. Of this we have a rich variety of example.

¹ *Nem.* viii. 60 (35) (Moore). ² *Pyth.* iii. 182 (103) (Moore).

³ *Cic. Fam.* v. 13.

In one passage he describes three different methods of government, but his words are so chosen that none can doubt that his unqualified sympathy lay with the aristocracy:

Truth in all states her fearless front may rear;
 Whether proud kings or fierce democracies,
 Or sapient peers the public weal maintain.¹

542 These lines exhibit a notable freedom of speech: for they are addressed to Hiero, a king himself. Observe, moreover, with what splendour of language and richness of poetic device he glorifies Corinth, which may be said to have been the chief citadel of strength for those who throughout all Greece espoused the aristocratic side:

There the Golden Sisters reign
 From Themis sprung, Eunomia pure,
 Safe Justice and congenial Peace,
 Basis of states; whose counsels sure
 With wealth and wisdom bless the world's increase,
 And Insolence, the child of bold-tongued Pride,
 Far from the social haunt repel.²

But I hope it will not be supposed that this tendency to praise only that method of government to which he had from early youth been accustomed was based simply upon the feelings of youth or the passion of a blind lover. For there was ample reason why the political sympathies of those who in that age sang at Olympia or at Delphi should naturally incline that way. For must not those ancient heroes, who on such occasions afforded to lyric poets the richest—if not the sole—material of their song, must they not, when compared with other men, have seemed to form an aristocracy of themselves? men who not only were honoured by the solemn style of 'god-begotten', but also were commonly believed to bear on

¹ *Pyth.* ii. 157 (86) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* xiii. 6 (Moore).

their very bodies some mark of a more than human, of an inviolable, nature : hence perhaps Pindar's phrase :

The sons of Gods alone nor chance nor change can wound.¹

Thus one who was constantly thinking and occupying himself about this order of beings, must almost necessarily have become imbued with the belief that men differ widely from men, and that not merely by law, or by common opinion, but by distinctions fixed at their birth, which no lapse of time can alter : and, moreover, that this distinction was transmitted to their sons and descendants, perhaps in perpetuity, at all events through long ages. And further than this, among their descendants were often ranked those actual contemporaries of Pindar, the chief and leading men throughout Greece, whose glorious contests he celebrated repeatedly, and with most of whom he was on intimate terms of friendship : for such were the manners of the times : these distinguished victors made great account of the distinguished poet who gave them the chief part of their glory. And that Pindar specially cherished and enjoyed his privileges, he himself confesses in well-known lines :

'Bove all the ranks of greatness at the top
Shines the consummate king—
Beyond that height lift not thy hope.
Be thine in that bright station long to bear
Thy upright course : mine, with the conquering
band
To take my honourable stand,
And 'mong the bards of Greece the palm of genius
wear.²

Assuredly, throughout all his writings, we at once trace the friend and associate of the leading men of the state, one accustomed to the tables of the rich, sometimes even

¹ *Isthm.* iii. 30 (18) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* i. 181 (113) (Moore).

drinking from cups of gold. And, as we all know, no bond of any association is closer than that between those whose good fortune it is (to use Horace's phrase) to 'visit Corinth', that is, to enjoy the friendship of great men.

In the next place, the pursuits and interests which especially appealed to Pindar are more peculiarly suitable to men of birth than to those of inferior rank, namely, the martial and gymnastic games by whose means especially he was enabled to revive the splendid legends or stories of the past. All these are the privilege of men of leisure, not of those who have to earn their bread from day to day. Pindar himself alludes to this fact, with the grace we might expect from him :

'Tis but the pastime, not the pain
Of Genius his unfailing word to give,
That bravery shall not strive in vain,
That virtue raised by him in Fame's bright heaven
shall live.

544 All have their tasks, and each by turns
His favourite compensation earns :
The ploughman rude, the shepherd, all
That strike the wild-bird's wing, or fish the deep,
Stir but at hunger's craving call,
And struggle but to feast and sleep ;
But he that in rough game or mortal fight
Bids the foil'd foe record his might,
Wins for his work the brave man's crown,
The lofty lucre of renown,
His nation's pride, the world's delight.¹

Lastly, which is worth all the rest, patricians play a part in the state which is wont pre-eminently to appeal to lofty and noble spirits. They who heartily espouse this side will at times be mysteriously lifted beyond the feelings of our daily life, and will be rapt away into times past : they will spontaneously betake themselves to the hidden sources of things and become, in imagination, wellnigh

¹ *Isthm.* i. 62 (45) (Moore).

eyewitnesses of primitive and unknown times. Listen now : for I cannot refrain from transcribing these magnificent lines, whose cadences by their mere sound, so full, so sweet, testify how gladsomely the poet expatiated on this theme :

the tempest wild

Of roughest war, in one disastrous hour,
 From their loved hearth and prosperous home
 Four kindred warriors swept away.
 Now, when the wintry month and darken'd day
 No longer lowers, again they bloom,
 Like the fresh vernal vale with nature's rosiest flower.
 Such is heaven's will ; and he that shakes
 Earth's bellowing shore, the Onchestian god,
 What time by Corinth's walls he makes
 Her sea-bridge loud his wild abode,
 Hath given Melissus' race this blazoning strain :
 He from the couch of ages, where she lay
 In dark oblivion hush'd away,
 Hath roused their ancient fame again,
 That now like Lucifer displays,
 Brightest of stars, her rising rays.¹

Thoroughly in harmony with this is his assertion that, even in the Isles of the Blessed, no small part of the happiness will consist in being with the time-honoured band of kings and heroes :

Peleus and Cadmus there high honours crown ;
 The like to great Achilles largely given
 With prayers from yielding Jove persuasive Thetis won.²

But while Pindar is so strong a supporter of the aristocracy, this does not hinder him from readily according loyal devotion to kings. Indeed, he honours even tyrants, such as Hiero, Thero, Arcesilas, with the very flower of his verse. What he thinks of democracy may be learnt from a single phrase when he refers to it as 'the fierce democracy'. 545

¹ *Isthm.* iii. (iv) 25 (34) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* ii. 141 (78) (Moore).

Thus we conclude that Pindar's ancestral political leanings were absolutely at one with his own entire temperament : we may say that he was emphatically the man and the poet of the few.

194 Nevertheless, he by no means shrinks from impressing the sternest warnings, when occasion demands, upon men of rank and powerful friends, sometimes by implication, sometimes openly and directly. For much the same function as, at Athens, the dramatists fulfilled towards a boasting and empty-headed populace, the Lyric writers, unless I mistake, maintained as regarded kings and nobles. Perhaps their duty and office did not much differ from the part assigned by Horace to the Tragic Chorus : ' Let it ever support the good, give sage counsel to its friends, soothe the passionate, and love those who shrink from sin.'¹ Thus Pindar soothes the passion of Arcesilas, supports and gives sage counsel to Hiero, and loves and encourages Thero, who it seems was shrinking from wrongdoing.

Let us consider shortly the features in some particular poems which set in relief either the good sense of his eulogies, or the respect which was felt in that age for the outspokenness of a poet's utterances. He begins by trying to win the goodwill of Arcesilas in several ways, but especially by declaring his praises, not merely in a single ode, as he had done for others, but by breaking out into that splendid Argonautic poem which is almost epic in its volume. Then he advances a somewhat enigmatic comparison which enabled him, on the one hand, so to veil his advice that it might run less risk of offending the citizens, and also be more respectful towards the king himself : on the other, to approach, as nearly as possible, to the form of a direct message from heaven, such as the

546 Greeks were accustomed to recognize, either in the responses

¹ *Ad Pis.* 196.

of their prophets or the words delivered from the inner shrine of the Gods :

Use now the wit of Oedipus profound—

If one with sharpen'd axe and reckless stroke

Lops as he lists the sightly branches round

And shames the honours of the spreading oak :

Though fruit thereon no longer glows,

Still her proud bulk and strength she shows,

What time in winter's hour of need

The crackling hearth her fragments feed ;

Or stretch'd along the lengthening row

Of stateliest columns rear'd below

Some stranger's pressing palace she sustains

With firm unfailling trunk, forc'd from th' unsheltered plains.¹

But in this passage I do not understand—as do all the commentators with whom I am acquainted—the phrase *χειμέριον πῦρ* (winter fire) to mean that the wood of the oak is cut off and used for the fire. With all respect to these learned scholars, I cannot but think this explanation inappropriate. But I take the passage in this way: the trunk of an oak, even when stripped of all its branches by some stroke of lightning, still maintains no uncertain show of its former self, with bark torn and limbs, as generally happens, hollowed out. But if it be removed from its native earth and made into a beam or column in some building, it yet preserves its characteristic quality so far as to remain firm and fixed, in its position, beyond all other material. But when he describes the task performed by the timber in an alien home as 'a wretched toil' (*δύστανον μόχθον*), you can see that he is borrowing the thought by anticipation from the corresponding factor in the simile. For it was the exiled Damophilus who was really 'wretched', not this tree. Damophilus, I say, whom Pindar in these lines veiledly praises and recommends to Arcesilas: by whose decree he was at that time living

¹ *Pyth.* iv. 467 (263) (Moore).

in banishment. Weighty words of exhortation follow, which indeed embrace the sum of the whole policy of the patricians :

With lenient hand, relenting sire,
 Soften and heal thy subjects' wound ;
 The worst, the weakest from its base
 A state with ease may shake ; but to replace
 Th' accomplish'd pile is power indeed,
 Unless some guardian spirit in his love
 Seize the loose helm, the leaders lead.¹

547 A little further on the poet openly refers to Damophilus by name : and many well-known topics, that are common in such petitions, are urged in his favour :

'Tis bitterest pain
 To know, yet need, and crave in vain
 The sweets that friends and freedom give ;
 Thus does this suffering Atlas strive,
 From wealth and kin and country driven,
 Against thy weight, his pressing heaven.
 Yet Jove the Titans loosed, and when the gale
 Vexes the deep no more, we furl the useless sail.²

It is highly characteristic of Pindar that, amidst so many other important topics, involved as one may say in a sea of fabled story, he clearly shows that he has nothing more keenly at heart than that his friend, lately ' welcomed as his guest at Thebes '—so he declares in the very last line of this renowned Ode—might not fail in his petition.

But Hiero, a more august potentate possibly, but with whom he was on more intimate terms of friendship, he addresses somewhat familiarly, and in a tone more nearly approaching ordinary converse :

Hail to thy greatness ! o'er the sea
 Like rich Phoenician stores I send
 My freight of eulogies for thee.

¹ *Pyth.* iv. 481 (271) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* iv. 510 (287) (Moore).

But praise on apes let boys bestow,
Keep thou the course thy virtues know :

Thus wisest Rhadamanthus won

The reverence of mankind :

The fruits of conscience all his own ;

No flattering falsehood lured his mind ;

Wherewith, the sufferer's and the listener's bane,

Weak ears intriguing whisperers gain.¹

And besides this, Pindar is not with Hiero, as in the case of Arcesilas, pleading a particular cause which was pressing at the moment, but as man to man exhorts the king generally on the theory of right living :

With forced applause, with grief profound,

The vulgar audience listens to the lays

That swell the prosperous stranger's praise :

Yet since the flatterer Envy's deadliest wound

Pains not the brave like Pity's tear,

Cling thou to good ; thy vessel's martial throng

With the sure helm of Justice steer,

And on Truth's anvil steel thy guarded tongue ;

Sparks of mischief struck from thee

Spread far and wide th' authentic flame :

Thousands observe thy sovereignty ;

A thousand listening ears bear witness to thy shame.²

And then, which is especially surprising, he actually criticizes him as too sparing of expense, and that with no vague allusions :

If yet Fame's dulcet voice to hear

Thou long'st, still crown'd to stand at Virtue's
post,

Oh ! shrink not from the worthless cost :

But, like a brave and liberal captain, spare

Thy spreading canvas to the wind.

Trust not, my friend, to Flattery's ill-bought breath :

Glory, whose living lamp behind

Departed mortals gilds the shrine of death,

¹ *Pyth.* ii. 125 (67) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* i. 162 (84) (Moore).

Bids History's pomp on Goodness wait :
 And rouses the rewarding strain
 To sound the triumphs of the great.
 Still Croesus lives, for kindness blest.¹

It may be said that lyric writers generally give themselves full play in applauding liberality of this kind; indeed, that it is the way of all singers in all times. And I agree: yet I am inclined to think that no ordinary freedom was enjoyed by a poet who did not hesitate thus to address a royal patron.

So far we have dealt with open, and by no means ambiguous advice: but (if we may trust critics and scholars) there are many more places in which the outspokenness is veiled and hidden from view, the poet selecting from the wide field of history such incidents as seemed appropriate to each poem. For instance, when honouring Telesicrates, a youth of Cyrene, who was, it would seem, of rather wanton disposition, he occupies himself entirely with marriage songs, celebrating, first of all, the loves of Cyrene and Apollo and then of one Alexidamus, a fleet runner, who by his swiftness of foot had won for himself a most honourable marriage with the daughter of the king of the Nomads:

Thus for his daughter fair the Libyan sire
 Fit spousal found. Her envied place
 Fast by the goal, in rich attire,
 He fix'd, to close and crown the race.
 'To him whose passing speed,' he said,
 549 'Her veil first gains, the prize be due,'
 Foremost Alexidamus flew,
 And by her yielded hand in triumph led
 Through troops of Nomads his accomplish'd spouse;
 They from their steeds with transports new
 Fresh leaves and flowers upon him threw,
 While plumes of conquest past hung graceful round
 his brows.²

¹ *Pyth.* i. 172 (89) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* ix. 206 (117) (Moore).

I am inclined to think that nowhere in ancient poetry will you find such graceful playing with the theme, or anything that so closely approaches the style of those ballads¹ which were such favourites with our own ancestors, especially with such as led lives in the open air, amid hazardous circumstances, threatened by neighbouring foes. Such men delighted in such ballads, probably on account of a certain freedom and joyousness which are closely akin to the bold licence of the camp. But to return to the point whence I digressed : it is said that by such stories as these Pindar sought to impress upon Telesicrates how great was the praise and honour of chastity :

That warned from joys forbidden men might haste
The practicable bliss to taste.²

And in another Ode he impresses just the same lesson upon two Aeginetan youths, Phylacidas and Pytheas, reminding them of the peril incurred by the renowned Peleus through the impure advances of a certain Thessalian :

'Twas all the truth reversed—the fraud of lust.
With fervent prayers, avow'd desires,
Oft had she press'd him : but his stern disgust,
His rage the bold proposal fires.
The wrath of hospitable Jove
He fear'd, and spurn'd the unholy love.
Jove from his cloudy throne, heaven's ruling lord,
Mark'd the just youth, and for his bride
Gave him the Nereid queen, his truth's reward,
That deep in crystal wave the golden distaff plied.³

From these examples it is possible to form a fair idea of the general quality of Pindar's method. When once he has the right clue given to him he endeavours, by all devices and resources available from fable or story, to form men's minds to virtue or political wisdom.

¹ *The Border Minstrelsy.*

² *Pyth.* iv. 162 (92) (Moore).

³ *Nem.* v. 56 (31) (Moore).

550 Should it seem strange and scarcely credible that such high reverence was entertained for the Muses in those times as to make men in a lawless age, possessed of royal power, willing to endure the reproaches, or even strictures, of a simple poet, we must recollect, firstly, that the Grecian mind had been trained in such high respect through the course of centuries. We have none of us forgotten the Homeric bard whom Agamemnon left to guard his wife at home, when he was departing for Troy :

At first, with worthy shame and decent pride,
The royal dame his lawless suit denied.
For virtue's image yet possess'd her mind,
Taught by a master of the tuneful kind :
Atrides, parting for the Trojan war,
Consign'd the youthful consort to his care.
True to his charge, the bard preserv'd her long
In honour's limits : such the power of song.
But when the gods these objects of their hate
Dragg'd to destruction by the links of fate :
The bard they banish'd from his native soil,
And left all helpless in a desert isle :
There he, the sweetest of the sacred train,
Sung dying to the rocks, but sung in vain.
Then virtue was no more : her guard away,
She fell to lust a voluntary prey.¹

And, in fact, it was no small part of Aegisthus' wickedness that he insulted and banished one thus held in almost sacred regard.

But it seems all the more natural and likely that, even in the time of Pindar, poets still maintained their privileged and free character, since they exercised an art and office which never failed to delight the whole class of soldiers and athletes. So that, if perchance any poet, through over-outspokenness, incurred the displeasure of prince or nobles, the popular favour would serve as a protection :

¹ *Od.* iii. 265 (Pope).

men realized that they could by no means afford to sacrifice so powerful a champion of their own interests.

Moreover, over and above those indirect allusions to which I referred just now, and which the wisest poets aimed at in the treatment of their themes, lest advice which was necessarily unpalatable might become even less palatable by being stated too openly, there was another fact in the delivery of these poems which had a considerable effect in sparing the feelings of those to whom such advice was given. These poems were neither read nor were they delivered 551 formally amid silence from a platform: they were set off by musical accompaniment and something like the accompaniments of a stage; so that attention was diverted to the brilliance of the surroundings, and any criticism that might be over bold nevertheless did not openly meet the notice of the ordinary crowd. How many can we suppose, amid the sound of the voices and the din of the instruments, can as much as have heard—not to say understood—what was being sung!

But really in the treatment of this subject the most important factor is the religious: I mean, that religious reverence with which ancient Greece regarded those who devoted themselves to poetry and song. Undoubtedly that which Tacitus tells us of German women was equally true of poets: the Greeks believed that in them there was something of a sacred and prophetic character: and 475 I apprehend that this opinion had a stronger hold in those times from the fact that the 'rhapsodists', as they were called, never or seldom wrote: they never read out what they had previously committed to writing, but poured forth their song just as occasion and time prompted, appearing to be inspired by divine influence.

It will be sufficient to have alluded once to this feeling, as it is well known and so trite as to be almost proverbial; it was especially marked among the Romans, for in Latin

the words 'Canere', 'Carmen', 'Vates', have all a double meaning ('to sing' or 'to prophesy': 'a song' or 'a prophecy': 'a poet' or 'a prophet'): in fact there was much in common between poets and augurs. And among those nations whose common speech bore traces of some close link which united poetry with the power of prediction, two results followed: on the one hand; even tyrants themselves were not seldom restrained by religious reverence; and, on the other, the favour of the people would be a great protection to poets whose criticisms were outspoken and severe; for the people would not stand any
552 cruel treatment of men who were regarded as wellnigh bringing oracles from the Gods.

It was this which enabled Simonides, who is said to have taught Pindar, to win the gratitude of King Hiero: and consequently, in his dialogue called 'Hiero', Xenophon, who shows great discrimination in assigning his parts, attributes to him in particular the function of royal counsellor; and the renowned Tyrtaeus had so great influence with the men of Sparta, that not only did he stimulate them to fresh combat when already routed and almost in despair, but also induced them to decree that certain Helots should, on his advice, be made free: advice than which scarcely any could have been more offensive and repulsive to the pride of Lacedaemonians. Nor did he effect this, I apprehend, by the mere force of his warlike songs, but much more by the belief they entertained of his sacred character: for he had been summoned through the advice of an oracle and poured forth his fiery song at the commencement of the battle, just as the frenzy moved him at the moment. But, as far as I know, we do not read that any rhapsodist or lyric poet was ever visited with the dire resentment of either prince or people because he had too freely reprimanded their failings; while, on the other hand, the Athenian populace condemned

Phrynichus to pay a pecuniary penalty, and Socrates even to suffer death : the explanation being, I suppose, that among them the belief in a divine influence over song and poets either did not exist or was less pronounced.

Thus far as to the judgement of the common crowd : but we must not suppose that the strength of the poetic outspokenness lay in anything so much as in what I may call a divine audacity which it bred in the poets themselves, as often as any of them felt that a voice, not his own but divinely inspired, spoke in his song. That Pindar held this view, to the great advantage of his poetry, is sufficiently clear from the first Pythian Ode. Give me leave to quote a few lines from the Exordium of this 553 celebrated poem, in the hope—for that is the aim of all criticism—that some new light may be thrown upon what is so familiar to us all :

*Empedocles
prosecutes
impiety
Socrates
same reason*

O golden lyre, the common treasure of Apollo and the violet-tressed Muses.

Why does he speak of a 'common treasure' ? Does not Pindar here seek to impress upon Hiero that everything which serves the poet's purpose is far from being concerned with pleasure merely : but is associated with some deity, and meant to carry out his behests : nor can it be slighted without reproach to him as well ? He next proceeds to show how important it is for even the blessed hierarchy of heaven itself to be justly regulated by the spirit of poetry and harmony :

The lancèd lightning's everlasting fire
Thou hast extinguish'd, while by thee
On Jove's own sceptre lull'd the Feather'd King
Forgets his awful ministry,
And hangs from either flank the drooping wing :
For even
The gods themselves thy searching shaft subdues
By skilled Latoides aim'd in heaven,
Framed in the bosom of the swelling Muse.¹

¹ *Pyth. i. 5* (Moore).

And then, as a warning not to scorn this most solemn messenger from Deity, he thus describes those who oppose Poetry :

But those, whom all-discerning Jove
Abides not, shudder at the sound
The chaste Pierian Damsels move,
On earth or in the restless wave,
Or where in durance underground
The gods' presumptuous foe
Lies, hundred-headed Typhon.¹

If it be thought over serious to seek the deliberate theory of a philosopher amid the splendour and burning words of a poet, I may add that I do not suggest that Pindar had any formulated doctrine to set forth, but threw it off, as chanced, in the full play of his ardent temperament. Still, even in that tumultuous tide of thought and phrase some more serious consciousness must be presupposed whereby, as a kind of ballast, the vessel of song may hold
554 a steady and just course, even amid its infinite unbounded and restless ocean. Such lines would be indeed little more than empty sound, were it not for the profound truth of the real essence of Poetry, which runs like a hidden vein of ore through the whole Ode. Briefly : in Pindar's judgment the disciples of the Muse do not seek a light or trivial reward : but rather, they are performing a task entrusted them by the immortal gods.

Moreover, the views which he held about divine things were such as would calm all fear and encourage freedom to the utmost : partly, because he firmly believed in the existence of a world beyond the grave, in which the good are rewarded, the evil punished : partly, because departed heroes and indeed Olympic deities were supposed to hover round even our earthly abode : so that none can fancy that he is ever free from witnesses to his good or evil actions.

¹ *Pyth.* i. 25 (Moore).

And first of the Gods below : let us take as the best guide to his belief those noble and wellnigh inspired verses in which he consoles Thero in the hour of adversity, and yet at the same time does not flinch from tempering his good fortunes with solemn warnings :

No less he knows
The day fast comes when all men must depart,
And pay for present pride in future woes.
The deeds that frantic mortals do
In this disorder'd nook of Jove's domain,
All meet their meed ; and there 's a Judge below
Whose hateful doom inflicts th' inevitable pain.¹

The poet seems here discreetly to increase the religious dread of Tartarus, in that he does not, as many have done, depict the punishments of individuals, but simply sketches the whole region in dark outline with a fearful (I might almost say religious) awe. Thus ' there is who passes doom beneath the earth ', ' there are who endure pain dreadful to gaze upon '. On the other hand he expatiates on the happiness of the blessed, as if he had been an eyewitness : 555 first, says he, those who have once or twice died worthily enjoy a mere untroubled ease ;

O'er the Good soft suns the while
Through the mild day, the night serene,
Alike with cloudless lustre smile,
Tempering all the tranquil scene.
Theirs is leisure ; vex not they
Stubborn soil or watery way,
To wring from toil want's worthless bread :
No ills they know, no tears they shed.²

But when they have thrice stood the ordeal of life and death, forthwith holy souls are wafted to some one of the islands of the blest where vernal breezes and flowers ever prevail.

There is indeed a blot on these lines, though in strict

¹ *Olymp.* ii. 105 (57) (Moore).

² *Ibid.*

harmony with Pindar's creed, in that he declares all this apparatus of reward and punishment to be reserved for those of noble birth alone. For he congratulates, and at the same time warns, the rich on this very account :

And Wealth more bright with Virtue join'd,
Brings golden Opportunity,
The sparkling star, the sun-beam of mankind :
Brings to the rich man's restless heart
Ambition's splendid cares.¹

The reason is that he thinks of wealth as bringing leisure with it, which if any man sets himself to employ rightly, he may, like a successful hunter, search out and explore many important questions and become versed in those studies which throw the light of truth on man and his life. ' If any one hath wealth, he knoweth what lies in the future : ' as to those less fortunate, Pindar is profoundly silent. And in Elysium itself, too, he places it as the consummate felicity of good men that they meet in familiar intercourse Peleus, Cadmus, Achilles, and others from whom the Greek nobility proudly traced their descent. Everything savours of birth and aristocracy, even in Orcus. Yet even here we see a notable proof of the poet's free outspokenness : for those whom he stimulates with the prospect of Elysium are the only men whom he warns to beware of Tartarus : that is, men who hold the first place by birth or wealth.

Here too, as elsewhere, Pindar more than once shows himself a follower of Pythagoras : as when he tells us how the heroes learnt in their youth :

Before all powers to fear and love
The god that wields the lightning's fire,
The deep-mouth'd thunder's lord, Saturnian Jove ;
Next, to thy reverend sire,
Through all his life's appointed day,
With her that gave thee thine, like honours pay.²

¹ *Olymp.* ii. 96 (53) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* vi. 23 (Moore).

176 182

also
schylus
399

193

556

but cf 194

174 157.16

This reads, I think, like a stereotyped phrase, and probably may be traced back to what were called the 'golden verses' of the philosopher. *Pythagoras*

Let us now come to the second aspect and quality of Pindar's religious piety: with whose fragrant sweetness the whole of his poetry is penetrated. This consists in his constant suggestion that the departed heroes are present with the great nobles he celebrates, at all times and everywhere; yes, and even the higher deities also: especially those from whose stock any particular prince or noble (as was commonly believed) traced his lineage. Thus we have the frequent mention of deities being summoned by night and answering the prayers of mortals whom they held dear:

At night's dark hour alone he hied
To the rough shore of the loud-bellowing main,
And called the Trident-sceptred God,
Whose form forthwith beside him stood.¹

Still more exquisitely fine is the account of Iamus:

Now when fresh youth its golden flower
Full o'er his blooming cheeks had strew'd,
Alone at night's tempestuous hour
In Alpheus' midmost stream he stood.
He called his grandsire Neptune's name,
Wide Ruler of the boisterous deep;
Called on that Archer God whose flame
Beams on the Delian steep;
For patriot fame he pour'd his prayer
Beneath the vault of heav'n: 'My son,'
Replied his Sire's unerring speech, 'repair
To yon frequented tract, my Word shall lead
thee on.'²

Do we not all but see the youth gazing around him, not knowing in which direction he should turn, since not the least shadow of a form was at hand, but only a kind of

¹ *Olymp. i. 115 (71) (Moore).* ² *Olymp. vi. 95 (57) (Moore).*

heavenly voice, to whose assurance he was to commit
 557 himself? Sometimes, too, the deity appears, even when
 unsummoned: as Pallas to Bellerophon:

Pallas made
 For his rude hand the golden rein
 In dazzling dream before him laid—
 ‘Sleep’st thou, Aeolian king?’ with wakening strain
 She cried. ‘Yon fiery steed to rule
 Take this bright spell.’¹

Thus it is implied that some god, even though there be
 no tie of kinship, will be at hand to help those who find
 out new arts.

And finally, there is no mountain or forest solitude,
 no river course, no shore, one might almost say not a
 summer breeze, which is not haunted by some diviner
 power, ready to make known his presence in the hour of
 need. Every spot is crowded with deities. Thus we meet
 with that lone-roving deity (*οἰοπόλος δαίμων*) who, by his
 gift of a clod of earth to one of the Argonauts, sealed
 a bond of friendly treaty between Europe and Libya for
 all time.² This, too, explains the astonishment of the folk
 of Thessaly, on the first appearance of Jason, a man
 clearly of heroic form:

Unknown he stood—‘Apollo’s mien
 Is this?’ some gazing wonderer cried,
 ‘Or his that wooed the Cyprian queen,
 Whose reins the brazen chariot guide?’³

What a striking picture of that golden time when, if
 I may slightly vary Virgil’s well-known verse, ‘men re-
 ceived the life of gods, and saw heroes mingled with the
 denizens of Heaven.’⁴

May we not mention here, too, how, even in his own
 age and in his own concerns, Pindar recognizes a similar

¹ *Olymp.* xiii. 94 (67) (Moore).

² *Pyth.* iv. 28.

³ *Pyth.* iv. 151 (87) (Moore).

⁴ *Eclog.* iv. 16.

care bestowed by heaven upon himself, and the close companionship, not indeed of a deity, yet of a heroic spirit? Certainly, at least, he records that Alcmaeon; whose shrine stood near his own dwelling, was at hand with kindly ministry and counsel when he was proceeding on a journey :

Nor with less rapture round Alcmaeon's brows

Will I the wreath entwine,

Less bathe him with the dews of song :

For he my neighbour is : his shrine

Guards with its shade my hallow'd house :

As to Earth's central dome I came,

His spirit cross'd my startled way,

Touch'd with his sire's prophetic flame,

And told the triumphs of the day.¹

558

Nor does the poet exhibit as taking part in our daily life only those august beings—divine or heroic—which the piety of universal Greece held in reverence ; but he asserts that the spirits of his ancestors are present to every man, and are at least witnesses of all he does, whether good or ill. He can conceive no more potent stimulus to excite high-born athletes than to summon from the shades below some one of their ancestors as a spectator, and to picture the contest as taking place in his presence. In solemn tones, assuredly, and such as reach not far from revealed truth, he claims for the departed their share also in the rejoicing and glory, whenever their sons or grandchildren or descendants are crowned victors :

Their kindred's rite the dead shall share ;

Its praise departed Virtue claims :

The trump of Glory echoes in the tomb.

From Fame, the child of Hermes, Iphion

Heard ere he died, and shall delighted tell

Callimachus th' Olympian Crown that fell

By Jove's good gift to his distinguished son.²

¹ *Pyth.* viii. 79 (56) (Moore).

² *Olymp.* viii. 101 (77) (Moore).

Elsewhere, in a lighter strain, yet using the tone of command in virtue of a poet's privilege, he dispatches a nymph as an envoy to the shades below :

Go now, sweet Echo of my lyre,
To pale Proserpine's melancholy dome
With thy proud tidings to the Sire ;
Tell Cleodamus, that his youthful son
In Pisa's glorious vale the braid
From Jove's illustrious games hath won
And twined the plumes of conquest round his head.¹

By this time it must be quite clear how just and proper, throughout this discussion of Pindar's outspokenness, has been our persistent reference to his religious creed. For what wrath, either of mob or king, could he fear who fully believed himself of the elect number of those destined to Elysian bliss ? What unpopularity among men would
559 he shrink from who held that his own life was passed amid the glorious illumination and companionship both of immortal gods and his own ancestors ? To come, then, to the conclusion, to which we have long been tending : I suggest that the chief function assigned by Providence to this outspoken freedom accorded to lyric poets was to keep alive some of those holier feelings and thoughts which otherwise would quickly have returned to heaven which gave them : an office which belonged in earlier days to rhapsodists and lyrists, afterwards to tragedians ; last of all to the band of philosophers. And thus was brought about the truth which we are taught in Holy Scripture, ' He left not himself without witness,'² even before that purer Light, never to be overshadowed, arose and cast abroad its illuminating rays.

To conclude : there may, unless I mistake, be found even in the history of later centuries facts which seem to lend no slight confirmation to this view as to the founda-

¹ *Olymp.* xiv. 29 (20) (Moore).

² *Acts* xiv. 17.

cf 265

tions of Pindar's outspokenness. What weapon was it which enabled that great city of God, when Rome was overthrown and she herself was, in some sort, a captive, to make her wild conquerors her captives? It was her independent spirit and the outspokenness of her divine message: and whence came such entire independence? In the first place, her children knew themselves assuredly immortal; and, secondly, they were fully persuaded that their God and His holy angels attended them at all times and in all places. And we may even conjecture Pindar to have been supported by some vague and distant anticipation of these things. Thus it was, in this respect also, the will of the great Supreme Power to maintain a kind of analogy, wherein earlier and imperfect shadows should in some degree run parallel to the final and perfect realities.

If these views appeal to any as not altogether unfounded, they will, no doubt, agree with me that it was not without the marked guidance of Providence that the Greeks were gifted, in the earliest days of their poetry, with that splendid line of three poets, each of whom in his own order is not only a primary poet, but also a model to all others: Homer, I mean, Aeschylus, and Pindar. And since, how- 560
ever, enough, consistently with our plan, has been said of their poetic work, we must now pass to an order of poetry different in character and coming from a different country: but before that I must say a few words concerning Sophocles and Euripides; as I should not like any one to complain that but one among the three lights of Tragedy has been included by me among primary poets.

Doubts suggested as to the claims of Sophocles to be included among primary poets. First, because, in the sphere of human life, he has no interest in people of minor importance : everything moves on too dignified a scale : there is not sufficient variety in the characters. Next, as regards the face of earth and sky, though he has given us most charming passages, both in the Ajax and Philoctetes, yet such instances are fewer than they should be in a primary poet. Then he is chiefly praised on the score of his style and his skill in construction of plot : neither of which factors touch the heart of original and genuine poetry, especially as he sometimes borders on what is repulsive : aims at scenic and popular effects : may often be detected in imitation : and was both in his life and in his writings even and easy-going (εύκολος).

I PROPOSE now to make some few remarks on the plays of Sophocles, and to consider the especial rank which we should accord this great writer among poets : and I perceive, indeed, that I have undertaken a task in which I run the risk of giving no slight offence. For you know how keenly people resent any question being raised concerning the merits of great poets, and especially in the case of those to whom they themselves have been devoted in their youth. For some reason they seem to take such criticism as a personal wrong or insult : just as if these writers with whose poems they had been familiar from childhood were connected with them either in blood or by
 562 some sacred bond ; and this is indeed a proof how great is the influence of genuine and divinely inspired poetry, when any imitation of it, however deceptive, touches the mind so deeply.

And perhaps in the case of Sophocles there is a peculiar and special reason why any one who, at this time of day, shall question the right of one who has been so highly

praised to the title of a primary poet should be unusually liable to give offence. For with Sophocles or Euripides the most part of our ingenuous youth make their first acquaintance with the real charms of the Greek tongue. It is mainly in the study of their writings that the minds of boys, who have become tired of light amatory poems, are wont to learn lessons of deeper quality. When they reach these studies they are urged to greater effort, in the hope of really understanding the beauty of ancient tragedy. No wonder, therefore, if they look back for the springs of poetry itself to those writers, thanks to whom they first began to see that there was anything real in poetry.

And there is this further difficulty that among all, without exception, who have ever written poetry, no one has ever earned more varied praise, whether from ancient or modern critics and readers. So that the 'buskin of Sophocles' (as Virgil has called it¹) has almost become a proverbial synonym for Tragedy. *Virgil meaning 2 lines, to be*

But, put shortly, the position comes simply to this: we must admit that we have been expending our time and labour upon an idle fancy, unless we are prepared to apply our theory to the most renowned writers just as strictly as to one who is of small account and gifts. The central point of our theory is that the essence of all poetry is to be found, not in high-wrought subtlety of thought, nor in pointed cleverness of phrase, but in the depths of the heart and the most sacred feelings of the men who write. Consequently, nothing will tend more conclusively to strengthen our contention than if, selecting one or two of those poets who are held of highest account, we take them as a test of the theory. The inquiry will mainly resolve itself into two questions: first, whether Sophocles exhibits traces of those qualities which usually show the presence of the true 563 vein and real force of poetry; and, secondly, if we decide

¹ *Eclog.* viii. 10.

that he cannot justly be ranked as a primary poet, we must explain what is the real ground of the praise which by general consent he has won. And should we fail to find any genuine spring of inspiration in his work, while there are not wanting amply sufficient reasons for his great reputation, then I apprehend that, though he cannot be called a primary poet, yet we may class him with those who have become poets in virtue of consummate skill and culture, rather than in virtue of natural instincts.

And, to begin with, I may as well frankly confess the truth, that hitherto, though a careful student of Sophocles, I have not been able to trace any one deep feeling and pervading passion running through the whole of his work. Thus I, necessarily, am doubtful whether anything of the sort possessed him. Of course, I am well aware that we can hardly infer the general disposition of a writer from the impression made upon a single reader. For what one critic is competent to gauge the varying genius of so many great poets? And I hope that some one else may be so fortunate, some time, as to trace some such constant vein of feeling, which hitherto has eluded my own careful search. I should certainly yield to none in pleasure and delight at the discovery. For do we not all count it as real gain when any new fact is brought to light concerning the sources of the best poetry and the inmost feelings of great men?

Still, I can hardly expect that any one will easily discover in our good Sophocles native springs of inspiration of this quality: I, indeed, entirely miss in him those glowing emotions of the mind which spring to birth spontaneously; and this, both in his choruses and in his discussions and dialogues. Let us see how he acquits himself in situations whose whole strength is wont to lie in generous warmth of feeling.

564 These are concerned either with strong human feelings, or with the whole aspect of sky, earth, and the changes of

the seasons. Are we, then, to conclude, some one may ask, that Sophocles shows small power in all that relates to human feelings? Does he who placed before us on the stage Electra, Philoctetes, Hercules, and, above all, Oedipus, seem to you to have utterly failed in this region? Sophocles, who, in his presentment of Ajax, so happily blended a warlike and ungoverned arrogance with the consciousness of a frenzy which he cannot wholly shake off?

Dost thou behold this once intrepid Ajax,
The brave, the mighty, long for strength renowned,
And dauntless courage in the bloody field,
Dost thou behold him? O what laughter now,
What vile reproach must he sustain!¹

I, for one, should most readily believe that many readers have found themselves moved in no small degree by these lines: for what affects us more deeply than the laments wrung from a noble and brave man, as he struggles against the hard conditions of his life? But the grounds on which I hesitate to allow that Sophocles, when he drew this picture, was wholly rapt and inspired, as those who are poets by Nature and necessity are wont to be, may be stated as follows. First, because all his labour and interest are expended on the single character of Ajax, to the almost complete disregard of those who play minor parts. For neither in Tecmessa, as far as I can see, nor in the Atridae, nor even in Ulysses as depicted by Sophocles, does anything whatever stand out as a clear distinguishing mark sufficient to separate any one of them from the ordinary run of mankind. They, one and all, simply say and do such things as may assist the plot, or contribute to a discussion on some question of casuistry, such as are constantly met with in the later Greek Drama: but of their real self and of all that belongs to it there is utter silence. On the contrary, in Shakespeare's plays, as we all know, 565

¹ *Ajax*, 363 (Francklin).

even the characters playing the most insignificant parts successfully claim their author's interest—not, of course, in equal degree, but in a similar way. With him we never find a countryman who happens to be standing by, or a soldier or a common jester, or any other whosoever, but has assigned him, in the word or two he has to say, something which suggests a character of his own. Thus we accord to Shakespeare, as of pre-eminent right, the high commendation of holding nothing that is human alien to himself, seeing that he was able to enter into the mind, the character, the very features of all classes of men in all parts of the world. In this respect he may be compared to Nature herself, which is wont to frame and adorn with minute detail, not merely regions which are, by reason of their striking beauty, visited and admired by all, but even obscure nooks not easily penetrated by the rays of the sun or by the eye of the sightseer. One and the same Nature, with one and the same loving care, adorns alike majestic oak-tree and the minutest specimen of fungus or fern which springs up under the shadow of that kingly tree. And perhaps we may in the same connexion compare the careful love of detail which our ancestors showed when building their churches, taking pains to carve and ornament the highest nook of the ceiling, the hinder part of the pillars, and everything that was far removed from the sun's light and men's observation. Consequently, when a poet lavishes his whole care on a single character, we judge that he is not modelled in Nature's mould, but on some rules of art. Whether, indeed, in our good Sophocles' case there is really any room for doubt on this point I leave skilled judges to decide.

I will add another point: those writers who have had the power of sympathizing with all frames of mind and all emotions—a quality in which Shakespeare was pre-eminent, if not unique, among our own poets and Homer

among the Greeks—have hardly been able to avoid introducing trivial and grotesque incidents in the very crisis of gravest events. For such is generally the case in real life : 566 serious things and mere trifles, laughable things and things that cause pain, are wont to be mixed in strangest medley. It is necessary, then, that Tragedy, as being a mirror of life, must leave room for an element of comic humour. But Sophocles' taste was, it would seem, too severe, his fastidiousness too great; to allow him to admit such a blending, such a hotch-potch of opposite qualities. We find in him no character like the soldier of the *Agamemnon* or the nurse in the *Choephoroe* : each of which has the like motive—to impress upon us, namely, that even men of the lowest rank, the sansculottes, occupied with meanest tasks, share in and understand life's sorrows and misfortunes. With Sophocles all is ornate, solemn, of set and formal speech : whence it is clear enough that he did not possess that source of inspiration which those enjoy who are by nature both alive to, and indeed sympathize with, every care.

But, then, who more felicitously skilful than Sophocles, in depicting those who are tortured by extreme suffering ? Only recall to mind Hercules on Mount Oeta, and the magnificent throng of words with which he himself describes the onset of the disease which gains on him every moment :

For, cleaving to my side, it eats within,
Consuming all my flesh, and from my lungs,
Still winding in, it drains my arteries,
Drinks the warm blood, and I am done to death,
My whole frame bound with this unheard-of chain.¹

These lines are, indeed, beyond all praise : and I remember how one who was amongst the most learned men that I can remember, having read this passage over again, impulsively exclaimed ' Bravo, Sophocles ! what perfect art ! ' And we certainly cannot deny it : yet I fear that

¹ *Trachiniae*, 1070 (1053) (Plumptre).

testimony such as this rather snatches away the crown of primary rank from the poet's brow than places it there.

567 For surely Sophocles has here with consummate art described the agony from without rather than seemed himself to weep with him that wept. Just compare these lines with the lamentations uttered by the Hebrew writers, such as those of David, Job, Hezekiah, who, moved by a Spirit higher than human, have recorded in poetic form the effect and result wrought upon wretched mortals by tortured limbs and drooping heart and the whole array of diseases and bodily pains. It will be found beyond all question that their bewailings correspond strikingly with the expressions met with every day in such cases in real life: short and agonized ejaculations being, one by one, wrung from their inmost hearts, as if by the very force of their suffering. Then they range sea and land, so to speak, in quest of comparisons, if by possibility they may describe in speech their secret feelings of utter misery: while the Hercules of Sophocles seems to state in set speech what any onlooker infers, rather than what he himself inly experiences.

It may be questioned, too, whether in Sophocles wholly different characters, when whelmed in similar calamities, exhibit sufficient difference, one from the other; whether they follow, that is, the rule and, as it were, inviolable decree of Nature, never so ordering her workings that any two living creatures, much less any two human beings, should correspond each to each in every detail. It is only one who not merely thoroughly grasps this principle, but furthermore, so expresses it in his poetry, that any reader may be conscious of a real bond of sympathy between him and each separate character, that can be adjudged and classed as a primary poet by special right—so far, at all events, as concerns that domain of Poetry which touches men's feelings and emotions.

To dwell just a little more at length upon the point to which we have thus been led : notice how very slight is the difference between Hercules and Philoctetes as regards their bearing under stress of pain. If indeed we except one detail—the fact that with Hercules the thought repeatedly presses of his disgrace, as he feels it, at being betrayed to tears like a woman by stress of anguish—all the rest is simply like Philoctetes. 568

Perhaps I may be met here with the question, whether it is quite fair to draw conclusions from bodily pains : since such suffering affects every one in much the same manner, and that a very simple one : so that we need not expect to see any difference between one person and another. Let us test the question, then, in another way, though still keeping to Philoctetes. For as he is comparable to Hercules in respect of disease and bodily pain, so, as regards the contempt and slight he experienced from the Atridae, he resembles Ulysses. Well, each of them inveighs against his enemies, not merely to like effect, but even in identical phrase and expression. We are at once conscious that the writer has taken little pains to assign to each expressions of resentment appropriate to his character. Nor is this a solitary instance ; if we compare Antigone with Electra, or Creon enraged and denouncing the augur, with King Oedipus in like passion, do we not there, too, utterly fail to trace that natural variety of tone and hue, and those true utterances which break from the depths of the heart ? Once more, the Argive Chrysothemis and the Theban Ismene, actually, in almost the same set identical words, each disowns her sister's scheme. And it will be noticed by any one, that while only seven plays of Sophocles survive to us, three times does he employ the familiar device of an ominous silence on the part of high-born women who, on simply hearing of some calamity, forthwith hang or stab themselves. First, we are told of Jocasta :

Why has thy queen, O Oedipus, gone forth
In her wild sorrow rushing? Much I fear
Lest from such silence evil deeds burst out.¹

569 Then, in the *Antigone*, the Chorus is perplexed what to think of Eurydice, the mother of Haemon :

What dost thou make of this? She turneth back,
Before one word, or good or ill she speaks.²

Lastly, in the case of Deianira too, just the same formula for dying (if I may so term it) is employed :

Why creep'st thou off in silence? Know'st thou not
That silence but admits the accuser's charge?³

Some writers, of course, through a kind of carelessness, often repeat themselves, while they nevertheless show discrimination as to their characters, and evince by other indications, and especially by their fully charged feeling, that they possess the native spring of Poetry. This is notably so, unless I am mistaken, in the case of our own Shakespeare. But, trust me, Sophocles laboured under no carelessness of this sort. Who of all the poets is more exquisite in rhythm? What artist ever handled the Greek tongue with greater power, to make it express whate'er he would? But I should say that the question stands much in this way; Sophocles, as his contemporaries bear witness, was pre-eminently of tranquil and easy temper, little liable to be deeply moved by grief, either on his own account or for the sake of others. For this is what I understand by that 'easy temper' (εὐκολία) which is the special quality of praise accorded to him by Aristophanes :

an easy-minded soul, and always was.⁴

Small wonder, then, if, in that region of Poetry which

¹ *Oedipus. Tyr.* 1092 (1073) (Plumptre).

² *Antigone*, 1258 (1244) (Plumptre).

³ *Trachiniae*, 826 (813) Plumptre).

⁴ *Frogs*, 82 (Frere).

depends on the more subtle motions of the soul, he should show himself less happily gifted.

But I am far indeed from denying that the minds of all men, who are not wholly wanting in appreciation, are most keenly affected from time to time by his work, and, in especial, by perusal of the renowned *Oedipus*. But this effect is, I think, produced less by any powerful feeling evoked in us by the actors than by the tenor of the plot. 570 It is the story itself, not the character of Oedipus, which seizes and captivates our minds : and this interest is by no means without its own special charm : but whether it can be justly attributed to the poet's art I shall not attempt to discuss here. 220

Passing, then, from these for the present, let us next consider what may be called the other province of the poetic kingdom : and in this (I will confess it) I am almost inclined to allow Sophocles primary rank : as you recollect, it is pre-eminently concerned with the influence of Nature and the charm of scenery. In the treatment of this theme the first place among the Sophoclean plays is held, by general consent, both on the ground of sweetness and impressiveness, by the *Oedipus at Colonus*. Indeed, the aged Sophocles, when conducting the aged Oedipus to his native Athens, where he was to find a destined resting-place, could hardly fail to be strangely moved and inspired by the thought of the familiar spots, by the memories of his boyhood, above all, by the presence of the deities whom in his boyhood he and his parents had worshipped. Then how sacred, how impressive, how far removed from the routine of daily life, was the fact that not merely his native country Attica, the common haven and asylum for all sufferers, but even his own town, his own native soil, nay, the rocks, fountains, and trees which had been familiar to him from his tenderest years, should have Guardian Spirits of special kindness. So, he hastens at the very

opening of the tragedy to make reference to the place most dear to him :

My father, woe-worn Oedipus ! afar,
If I see right, are towers that shield a town ;
This spot is holy, one may clearly tell,
Full as it is of laurel, olive, vine,
And many a nightingale within sings sweetly.
Rest thy limbs here upon this rough-hewn rock.¹

In exactly the same spirit we have the frequent praise,
571 throughout the play, of all that concerns Attica, and in
especial the picture of the last resting-place of the dying
old man, which is described almost by rule and line : so
that any one who will may follow his footsteps and not
diverge a hair's breadth from the hallowed spot :

And when he neared the threshold's broken slope,
With steps of bronze fast rooted in the soil,
He stopped on one of paths that intersect,
Close to the hollow urn where still are kept
The pledges true of Perithos and Theseus ;
And stopping at mid-distance between it,
And the Thorikian rock, and hollow pear,
And the stone sepulchre, he sat him down.²

By such indications of the actual spots and by obscure
allusions frequently made to the near presence of guardian
deities, the writer brings it about, that a tragedy which
more than all the rest lags in plot and action and pro-
ceeds haltingly, yet attracts and long holds our attention
with powerful grip : however often I read it, I am moved
as deeply as were those who, when they first heard it,
decreed the prize with fullest honours to Sophocles, though
his powers seemed already to some to be failing through
age. Hence, even to me, it appears almost sacrilege to
deny inspiration to such a man. One is reminded of Virgil,
201 and might almost believe that, all unknown to himself,

¹ *Oed. Col.* 14 (Plumptre).

² *Oed. Col.* 1661 (1590) (Plumptre).

some contributory streamlet of that part of his poetry which depends on the delight in natural things may have trickled down to him from Sophocles.

And we shall find not a little that strengthens this opinion, when we turn back to the *Ajax*. For in that play men's fates and emotions are exquisitely blended with the various beauty of sea, shore, and river. As when the sailors in quest of their lost leader invoke the spirits haunting the region :

Who, then, will tell me ; who
Of fisher's loving toil, *i.e. fisher's that love toil*
Plying his sleepless task, 572
Or who of Nymphs divine
That haunt Olympos' height,
Or which of all the streams
Where Bosporos flows fast,
Will tell if they have seen him anywhere,
Wandering, the vexed in soul.¹

Again, the same men, more than once, with a sort of home-sick gaze, look back on their native land, not without a weary disgust of the Trojan soil :

What joy remaineth for me ?
Would I were there, where the rock,
Thick-wooded and washed by the waves,
Hangs o'er the face of the deep,
Under Sunion's broad jutting peak,
That there we might hail, once again,
Athens, the holy, the blest.²

We can fancy that we actually see the vessel sailing along the familiar shore, the sailors standing up on the deck and joyfully hailing their native land.

Then this too :

O glorious Salamis !
Thou dwellest blest within thy sea-girt shores,
Admired of all men still ;

¹ *Ajax*, 888 (879) (Plumptre).

² *Ajax*, 1232 (1215) (Plumptre).

While I, poor fool, long since abiding here
 In Ida's grassy mead,
 Winter and summer too,
 Dwell, worn with woe, through months innumerable.¹

Is not that an exact picture of the longing with which wanderers, far from home, turn their eyes back to their accustomed haunts? Islanders and used to the sea, they think slightly of the downs and meadows under Mount Ida, of that low-lying, tree-shaded region, those 'meadowy pastures of the sheep'; as compared with the open shore, the steep cliffs of their home, with the ocean breezes around them.

On this theme, however, there is another strange fact to be noted, namely, that men, far off from home and weighed down by some grief, are wont to consider the very
 573 regions themselves, which have become familiar by long association, as being comrades and sharers in their sorrow. Consequently, when bidden to leave them, even for their own country and for freedom, they will feel a certain regret at the prospect of being separated from the objects which had been, perhaps through many years, a solace and comfort to them. Whoever would thoroughly penetrate the secret causes of this fact of human nature will perhaps find himself inevitably compelled to rise to things higher and diviner, and to consider the whole subject of Poetry on that side of it where it touches the wisdom of Heaven. If you ask for illustrations, you will find the noblest in the story which is told about a castle on the Lake of Geneva,² when the one survivor among many captives was reluctant to be relieved of his chains, and could not, without wrench and effort, resign the bare walls, the plash of waters, the cell's cold stone floor, the cracked walls in many places admitting the light and air of heaven. With this single exception, which will to many perhaps appear

¹ *Ajax*, 601 (596) (Plumptre).

² *The Prisoner of Chillon*.

incredible and like a morbid dream, I doubt indeed whether in any author we shall find more striking examples of this clinging affection, than in Sophocles' portrayal of Ajax and of Philoctetes.

And indeed, when Ajax has become weary of his life and looks forward eagerly to his final rest in death, even then he is held back for a while by an indefinable sense of sorrowful regret at the thought of leaving rivers, caverns, and woods which, by a campaign of ten long years, had become almost as companions and friends to him :

O ye paths of the wave !
O ye caves by the sea !
O thou glade by the shore !
Long time, long time my feet
On Troia's soil ye kept ;
But never, never more
Breathing the breath of life ;
Let the wise hear and heed.
O streams, Scamandros' streams
Hard by, to Argives kind,
Never again shall ye see
This man who calls to you now.¹

By the very flow of the lines, sweet and wonderful as 574 it is, Sophocles has taught us here how deeply it touches a man's spirit to be wrenched from regions made dear by long intercourse : and this is more striking, if we remember Ajax's high spirit and indomitable temper.

Then, in the *Philoctetes*, nothing throughout the whole play so touches us as the frequent mention of his cave, the mountains, the rivers, indeed even the birds and beasts, by whose friendly influences the sorely stricken exile had somewhat lightened the burden of his griefs. This is why, at the very beginning of the poem, we have our attention carefully drawn, in vivid outline, to his unlovely retreat, more like the lair of a wild beast :

¹ *Ajax*, 411 (Plumptre).

But thy task it is
 To do thine office now, and search out well
 Where lies a cavern here with double mouth,
 Where in the winter twofold sunny side
 Is found to sit in, while in summer heat
 The breeze sends slumber through the tunnell'd vault ;
 And just below, a little to the left,
 Thou may'st perchance a stream of water see,
 If still it flow there.¹

Hence, when betrayed by Neoptolemus, Philoctetes does not make the same appeals that others do in the same plight : he does not invoke the Gods, nor the Furies : he only appeals to his island, and the old familiar places :

O creeks ! O cliffs out-jutting in the deep !
 O all ye haunts of beasts that roam the hills !
 O rocks that go sheer down, to you I wail
 (None other do I know to whom to speak),
 To you who were my old familiar friends,
 The things this son of great Achilles does ;

O cave with double opening, once again
 I enter thee stript bare, my means of life
 Torn from me. I shall waste away alone
 In this my dwelling, slaying with this bow
 Nor wingèd bird, nor beast that roams the hills :
 But I myself, alas ! shall give a meal
 To those who gave me mine, and whom I chased
 Now shall chase me ; and I, in misery,
 Shall pay in death the penalty of death
 By me inflicted.²

575 Finally, when, as he believes, about to be left to languish in exile, it is by their companionship and comfort that he seeks to soothe his grief :

O cave of hollow rock,
 Now hot, now icy cold,
 And I was doomed, ah me !
 To leave thee never more ;

¹ *Phil.* 15 (Plumptre).

² *Phil.* 959 (936) (Plumptre).

But e'en in death thou still wilt be to me
My one true helping friend.¹

O all ye wingèd game,
And tribes of bright-eyed deer,
Who on these high lawns fed,
No more from this my home
Will ye allure me forth.
I wield not in my hands
The strength I had of old
(Ah me !) from those my darts ;
Full carelessly this place
Is barred against you now,
No longer fearful.²

Moreover, he shows that he shall feel regret for them in future days, even when he has achieved a triumphant release and full happiness. I shall quote once more the oft-quoted lines, both for their intrinsic beauty and because they are more appropriate than any to my present subject :

Come, then, I leave this isle,
And speak my parting words :
Farewell, O roof, long time
My one true guard and friend :
And ye, O nymphs that sport
In waters or in fields ;
Strong roar of waves that break
On jutting promontory,
Where oft my head was wet
(Though hid in far recess)
With blasts of stormy South :
And oft the mount that bears
The name of Hermes gave
Its hollow loud lament,
Echoing my stormy woe ;
And now, ye streams and fount
Lykian, where haunt the wolves,
We leave you, leave you now,
Who ne'er had dreamt of this.

¹ *Phil.* 1109 (1081) (Plumptre).

² *Phil.* 1146 (Plumptre).

Farewell, O Lemnos, girt by waters round,
With fair breeze send me on
Right well, that none may blame,
Where Fate, the mighty, leads.¹

We cannot help feeling that this most exquisite Farewell was due from Philoctetes, as much as it is due from a youth about to leave his country that he should seek a parent's embrace and blessing.

576 Who will deny that lines like these have a genuine inspiration and are 'sweeter than honey'? But I fear that they will be found too rare in Sophocles to allow them to be taken as a test of the quality of his poetry as a whole. Yet had it not been his lot to grow old in the shelter of a cultured city life, such as was that of distinguished men at Athens, I believe he would have afforded many more such illustrations; chiefly, because, if we may trust tradition, such was his rooted attachment to his home and native ground, so 'extremely fond of the Athenians' (to use their own description of him) was he, that he would accept no invitation, not even of the greatest monarch, which involved leaving his own country. If, then, any one wishes to place him in the circle of primary poets, on the score of his love and devotion to his own country, I shall make no objection, though I could wish for more numerous or more decisive evidences of this sort, or at any rate that such as there are should bear clearer marks of strong feeling, and should seem to gush forth freely rather than to be fashioned and polished by art.

Moreover, may I not submit that his case is perhaps all the weaker, because of the very praises which by general consent he has won for himself? These praises, I should say, are hardly at all concerned with any quality which is thoroughly cognate with and common to genuine poetry. For I note that Sophocles approves himself to the great

¹ *Phil.* 1498 (1451) (Plumptre).

majority of readers mainly for two reasons : either because he is so finished and subtle in his diction, and easily stands out as the most learned among the whole learned Greek race : or because he weaves the general sequence of his plot so cleverly and cunningly. Of these two grounds, I infer that the first specially commended itself to the ancient Greeks, the other to our own times, and chiefly to the judgement of those who hold with Aristotle that the chief merit of a poem lies in the action. But in each case we may be allowed to question whether they necessarily touch the real art and poetic gift, or may not 577 merely be viewed as their formal part and machinery.

First, then, let us consider the charm of his perfect Attic Greek, his consummate use of words and sentences : as we all know, so far as this is concerned, Sophocles was almost revered as divine in the critical judgement of the Greek ear : at least, if we may believe that the popular vote and taste is fairly reflected in the well-known and beautiful epigram :

Gently, where lies our Sophocles in sleep,
Gently, green ivy, with light tendrils creep :
There may the rose-leaf too and cluster'd vine
Climb round his honour'd tomb in graceful twine :
Sweet were his lays, with sense and feeling fraught,
Alike by Muses and by Graces taught.¹

Observe that the ivy-leaves, ' the meed of learned brows,'² crown his head especially because ' sense and feeling ' are embodied in ' sweet lays ' : and how great was the power and attraction of this among the Greeks, especially with the Athenians, can, I think, scarcely be conjectured, much less realized, in our own duller clime and by our less sensitive ear. But to those who hold that ' beauty of language ' is one of the very sources and fountain-heads of Poetry and

¹ *Anthol.* (Macgregor).

² *Hor. Odes*, i. 1. 29.

must colour the whole stream, I should be inclined to say that they fall into precisely the same mistake as one who should maintain that we apprehend those objects which touch our external sense with the body, not the mind : whereas all philosophy which is at once sane and noble teaches us it is not with our eyes we see the things we see, nor are sounds heard by the ear : but that the mind withdrawn in its own dwelling makes use of these agents as only messengers and reporters. In the same way Poetry uses both words and metres as mere instruments, just like a queen employing her messengers : they are not dominant, not of first importance ; the heavenly flame is not by their means enkindled, but merely transmitted. Hence it follows, with regard to any poet who by general consent is mainly
578 praised for the richness and beauty of his diction, that we may fairly question if he has anything in common with those who are made poets by Nature and true feeling before they occupy themselves with literary style and metrical form.

With regard to the second ground of praise, which is given to poets who cleverly construct their plots, who contrive intricate situations, and yet through them all guide the thread of the story to the point which their scheme or truthfulness to facts requires, perhaps the question will be more difficult : especially as we have to reckon with such weighty authorities as Aristotle and his followers, who emphasize the 'plot' or story, as being of greater importance than all other elements of a drama, and place Sophocles before all other tragedians as being the most skilled and consummate artist in construction and plot. Moreover, almost the whole of this line of argument is wont to be based upon the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, as if it were the only or at least the main proof of their position. Now their authority would have greater weight with me, did I not observe that they themselves defer too much to the

popular judgement. I find that all through Aristotle's *Art of Poetry* there is an underlying appeal to the people and the gallery : that, invariably, it is the external form and feature of the poem, not the inner spirit of the poet, which is looked to and considered : and that this is especially noticeable when Aristotle develops his reasons for holding that in the composition of Tragedy the plot should be assigned the chief place. Though he has the air of offering many reasons, yet the sum of them all is contained in this single one : ' Those parts of Tragedy, by means of which it becomes most interesting and affecting, are parts of the *fable* : I mean, *revolutions* and *discoveries*.'¹ As though, forsooth, the reputation of great poets is to stand or fall by theatrical applause, by the number and lungs of the shouters.

If a plan
meant to
the people
orator
than Ari
has gone
grown

The man who has made up his mind to be governed by decrees of this sort must needs rank some trivial story, such as may be met with nowadays in any bookseller's shop, above the *Iliad* itself. Indeed, people who take up such a book cannot relinquish it till read through to the end : so enthralled are they by the skilful intricacy of its tangled skein. Such a theory, I imagine, scarcely ever, if ever, happens in reading Homer or Aeschylus : more truly inspired Poetry elects to be separated by a vast gulf from mere skill in story-telling. But it is my deliberate opinion, however, that true genuine Poetry may show itself also in the construction of the plot : if a writer of surpassing power were to set forth the changes and chances of mortal life, the issues of conduct, and the mocking sport of Fortune, not with intent that his books may be devoured by boys and girls for mere amusement, but that he himself may enjoy a profounder sense of the laws which silently control and govern all things. This, I repeat, I acknowledge to be true Poetry : and most likely to be found in

¹ Arist. *A. P.* vi. 17 (Twining).

men whose minds are thoroughly imbued with sacred prophecy or history.

221 But to attribute so splendid and lofty an aim to Sophocles, even in the *Oedipus*, is impossible, first and chiefly because the details of the story are so shocking: indeed, to confess the truth, it has always seemed to me to border on that class of story which Aristotle himself rejects as being monstrous and repulsive, and it goes against our right feeling that one who is innocent of any crime should be so harshly punished, and should leave the stage without hope, without even an implied suggestion that at some future time his fate may take a happier turn: just as if some relentless Genie played with all men's fortunes as with his. Aeschylus, unless I am mistaken, has a far higher religious sense: when cruel and wicked deeds are wrought, he takes greater pains to hint at the real presence of Deity and at the truth that One above will both exact due penalties and restore those who have suffered undeservedly. But when once we feel, in connexion with such an important element, any vague suspicion of this kind, I am afraid that our minds tend to turn with disgust from those oft-praised 'revolutions and discoveries', and that all the more the more cleverly they are contrived. So, while I fully allow that no artist ever wrought the web of his story with greater art or skill: yet it may well be questioned if this very skilfulness may not somewhat detract from his praise as a poet: for he is without true religious feeling; without pity; and without that tender love of humanity with which Virgil is wont to trace the story of unhappy and suffering mortals.

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Nor ought I to omit to add this: Sophocles excelled beyond all other dramatists in all that relates to scenic apparatus and device: and there is no need to demonstrate how perilous is such a gift, and how near it is to elaborate histrionic devices. Aeschylus also is said to have

enlarged in many respects the machinery of the stage. But observe, how even here each is true to his own character. Aeschylus indeed, if I understand aright, was the first to substitute tragic representation for lyric songs, and only introduced such changes in the character and number of actors as was absolutely needed for a simple and dignified treatment. Sophocles brought on a third actor; he had his stage painted, and increased by one-fourth the number of the Chorus: the one effect of all the changes being to transfer the pleasure from the ear to the eye of the spectator. Indeed, it is said that he sometimes designedly wrote tragedies in order to suit this or that actor. Did time allow, I could point out many instances taken from his plays, which would wholly fail of their effect unless the scene were presented before the eye on the stage: and yet Aristotle himself declares that 'the effect of Tragedy can be felt without representation and actors'. But let me ask, what is the end and purpose of introducing in the *Electra* the shrouded body of Clytemnestra, just after the murder, as if it were that of Orestes: whereby Aegisthus is first deceived and then bewildered and appalled. To what purpose the feigned contrition of Ajax, the long-delayed contrition of Deianira and of Creon? What other justification of these changes of feeling can there possibly be but that they aimed at keeping the attention of spectators and readers in suspense? All such things have to do with the stage effect, not with the author.

Then we note that Sophocles from time to time presents on the stage, what is not merely hateful, but actually monstrous and horrible, such as Philoctetes' wound, the tunic of Hercules, the mangled eyes of Oedipus. Again, there is much too great elaboration of details, when any long narrative or casuistical discussion is introduced, with the result (and no result can be more offensive) that the poet very often is playing the part of a rhetorician or

sophist, or even of some pushing demagogue or would-be politician. Assuredly, if Sophocles is open to blame in these particulars, any one may see that one simple explanation accounts for them all. Everything he wrote suggests a man whose poetry did not flow spontaneously as theme and feeling urged, but was with great effort and toil worked up to a point which would suit the stage and be more pleasing to the Athenian populace.

Then even the ancients bear witness that he was an imitator ('he culls beauties from each poet', says the Scholiast), and no one who has even dipped into Homer or Aeschylus before reading Sophocles can fail to notice it. This, indeed, is only an indication that a writer is without native poetic feeling, where it appears to result, not from carelessness or rapid composition, but from art and design, and especially in passages which are introduced in order to touch the reader's feelings. Let those who claim primary rank for Sophocles tell us, whether we may not fairly assign to the latter class the dialogue of Ajax and Tecmessa, which closely follows Hector's well-known farewell to Andromache: or the whole conception of the *Electra*, which is almost exactly on the lines of Aeschylus' *Choephoroe*, except that Sophocles held it right to dispense with all the constant reference to religion, by which alone Aeschylus justified his story against the charge of impiety.

But if (and it is commonly alleged) we infer the celebrated 'easy temper' (εὐκολία) of Sophocles to have been closely allied to the licence of his day, there will be less reason for surprise that such a distinguished and graceful
 582 writer was without genuine poetic inspiration. We all know that nothing more dulls and weakens sincere and genuine feeling than an indulgent and pleasure-loving way of life. The admirers of Sophocles, then, may be the less troubled if he be degraded from patrician rank, as we shall allow him to take the very first place among those who

are poets made, not poets born : yet even in giving this verdict, we ought perhaps to make an exception in favour of that one special merit which has been before referred to, namely, that he seems often to have spoken with full and natural feeling whenever some nearer reference to places, especially those dear to himself, chanced to offer itself.

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Euripides' title to rank among primary poets. Four reasons why some have demurred to his claims examined and explained. It is finally maintained—special stress being laid upon the characters of Iphigenia, Antigone, and Polyxena—that while he dwelt upon and praised with sincere delight the common feelings and affections of home life, yet that he lingered most willingly and lovingly on qualities of sterner vein and such as are closely allied to asceticism. The charges against him of misogyny and even godlessness considered.

JUST as in ordinary life it not unfrequently happens that the opinion which we have for years held of some particular man, even of one with whom we have lived on terms of intimacy, has to be changed or modified, when light has been thrown upon the meaning of his habits and way of life, on that side of his character which perhaps before seemed wanting in tenderness or wisdom : so no one who has given himself even but slightly to the study of the Muse can doubt that the same experience meets us in connexion with Poetry. For indeed, to confess the truth, the problem of the central significance of any poet's writings is too subtle and complex to be proved to demonstration : there will always be room for critics to offer some new probable interpretation. In this, as in much else besides, ' Poetry is
584 like a picture.'¹ How often, indeed, even after long acquaintance with a picture, do splendid, and perhaps the most beautiful, parts of it reveal themselves to us, when perhaps the rays of the sun have fallen upon it, after we have once placed it in the proper light ! how many beauties at once stand forth in shaded corners, in high removed places, in regions otherwise dark and forbidding, which had previously escaped even the most skilled and critical

¹ Hor. A. P. 361.

observation, to say nothing of our own! Assuredly there is no reason why the same thing should not happen in poems also: at least in the works of those poets of whose life and manners there is either no record or merely some dim memory: since it is the special and peculiar virtue of Poetry ever to hold something secret, and always to yield to all who meditate upon it long and deeply a rich harvest of thought. Indeed, the special hope which stimulates us to devote ourselves to these studies is the hope that we may in time become familiarly acquainted with great men and penetrate into their most intimate counsels: whence it follows that there is always something for us to learn. And we shall, I think, consider it an unqualified gain should any one among those who, on first acquaintance, seemed of secondary and minor powers, so justify his claims, on what are called 'second thoughts'—which are often the 'wiser thoughts'¹—as to appear entitled to enrolment among those of primary rank: the real source of his inspiration having been discovered. I say we shall put this down as a distinct gain, for what lover of the spring and of its flowers does not welcome with delight some new species, or even a well-known species which he had overlooked before?

I have said this much by way of prefacing to-day's lecture, because I am afraid that in what I have said in former lectures I have not done adequate justice to that great man whom Attica, the nurse of Tragedy, ever ranked as the third among her tragic dramatists. In fact, when I first addressed myself to my present method and plan of treating poetry, I by no means inclined to think (I will confess it) 585 that Euripides had any title to be ranked among those who have been so independent as to seek out for themselves their own fount of inspiration.

When, however, after elucidating and explaining, to the

¹ Eurip. *Hipp.* 436.

best of my power, the plays of Sophocles, I came to consider Euripides more nearly, many points arose which gave me pause and made me slow to degrade from primary rank a poet who has won such praise: and the chief of them was this, that I think I may venture to say that I have put my finger on a definite source and origin of his poetry, or at least a thread which connects, I will not say all its parts, but at least those which are most striking and most inspired. In short, I decided that it would be worth while perhaps to set forth and consider the arguments on either side, provided I am capable of expressing in Latin what I seem to myself to see and feel. If nothing else, we shall, I hope, effect this much: we shall set forth the topics which ought to turn the scale in such an inquiry: we shall consider what combination of excellence and defect is possible in one and the same writer: and finally, realize how wrong it is to be too dogmatic in a decision on so doubtful and delicate a problem.

But to come to the point. The grounds of complaint against Euripides are well known and indeed trite. The first is that his language is often trivial and in bad taste, as he chatters away or even sermonizes at some great crisis. Next, his choruses are, generally, feeble and sometimes insipid and flat. Again, he assails with almost savage reproach the whole of womankind. Lastly, he speaks without due restraint of the immortal Gods and of all kinds of religion, and thus sins against true piety. The upshot of all which criticisms is that it is incredible that one chargeable with such faults as these, could be capable of being carried away by generous and truly poetic enthusiasm.

Now, to begin with, there is no need to spend much time on discussing his frigid and ill-timed argumentativeness, since the fact stands admitted, nor would it be easy to quote a single tragedy of Euripides which does not

1,378
 Euripides was
 recruited
 impiety
 Clean 586
 learn
 from the life discovered among the Egyptian
 of course this proves no more
 against him than against Socrates

exhibit, even to the most hasty reader, blemishes of this kind : thus Medea, stricken with heavy misfortune, in the very stress of her grief and rage, describes in set language how difficult is the position of those who depend on the judgements of others ! and then how unequal are the terms on which women contract marriage :

From my apartment, ye Corinthian dames,
Lest ye my conduct censure, I come forth :
For I have known full many who obtained
Fame and high rank ; some to the public gaze
Stood ever forth, while others in a sphere
More distant, chose their merits to display :
Nor yet a few, who, studious of repose,
Have with malignant obloquy been called
Devoid of spirit : for no human eyes
Can form a just discernment.¹

And a few lines further on :

But sure among all those
Who have with breath and reason been endued,
We women are the most unhappy race.

And she pursues the subject at some length, finally quoting herself and her own experiences by way of illustration. What shall we say, again, of this speech of Jason towards the end of the play : does it not suggest the skill of the rhetorician rather than the real feelings of a father ?—

O most abandoned woman, by the gods,
By me and all the human race abhorred,
Who with the sword could pierce the sons you bore,
And ruin me, a childless wretched man,
Yet after you this impious deed have dared
To perpetrate, still view the radiant sun
And fostering earth : may vengeance overtake you !
For I that reason have regained which erst
Forsook me, when to the abodes of Greece

¹ *Medea*, 216 (Wodhull).

I from your home, from a Barbarian realm,
 Conveyed you, to your sire a grievous bane,
 And the corrupt betrayer of that land
 Which nurtured you.¹

How far more just, how much more true to nature, is our
 587 own Shakespeare! There are no high-sounding phrases, no
 shrewd pointed sayings, when he makes a father, who
 hears of the murder of his wife and children, thus express
 himself :

Macduff. My children too ?

Ross. Wife, children, servants, all
 That could be found.

Macduff. And must I be from thence !
 My wife kill'd too ?

Ross. I have said.

Macduff. All my pretty ones ?
 Did you say all ? O hell-kite ! All ?
 What, all my pretty chickens and their dam
 At one fell swoop ?²

Euripides sometimes offends us, not by a set harangue,
 as it were, but by his proclivity to interposing wise saws
 or proverbs in places far from suitable : in fact, he not
 unfrequently inserts some short sentence of this quality,
 in a moment of crisis, when men's minds are stirred to their
 depths. For instance, who but is astonished at the sentence
 closing Andromache's lament for her son's death :

All men hold
 Their children dear as life : but he who scorns them
 Because he ne'er experienced what it is
 To be a father, though with fewer griefs
 Attended, but enjoys imperfect bliss.³

How frigid, too, is his fondness for setting everything out
 fully and exactly when expressing the deepest thoughts !
 In real life men who are more than usually stirred hint

¹ *Medea*, 1320 (Wodhull).

² *Macbeth*, iv. iii.

³ *Androm.* 419 (Wodhull).

at rather than fully state what they feel. Thus I cannot bring myself to believe that Andromache, when contending with her rival, would really speak out such thoughts as these, though doubtless they must have been present to her mind :

Alas ! impetuous youth
Proves baleful to mankind, and there are none
Who act with justice in their blooming years.
But what I dread is this, lest slavery curb
My tongue, though I have many truths to utter :
In this dispute with you, if I prevail,
That very triumph may become my bane ;
For those of haughty spirits ill endure
The most prevailing arguments when urged
By their inferiors.¹

And, indeed, who can endure that scene in which Medea, wild with frenzy and prepared to murder her children, yet 588 cannot forgo her little maxim?—

I now am well aware
What crimes I venture on ; but rage, the cause
Of woes most grievous to the human race,
Over my better reason hath prevailed.²

Numberless instances of this sort may be found in Euripides : and they are all spoilt by one and the same fault : the event is merely narrated, not really acted before our eyes. This is the same fault that is made by those who are beginning to learn painting : for I have frequently heard experienced artists declare, that there is no more common mistake among beginners than their constant habit of introducing details which they know to belong to the object which they are painting, instead of reproducing those which they actually see at the moment : a failing, as I apprehend, of men who prefer to be clever rather than simple and natural.

Another point is that our good Euripides, whether to

¹ *Androm.* 184 (Wodhull).

² *Medea*, 1074 (1078) (Wodhull).

please himself or (as I am inclined to believe) to humour his Athenian audience, hardly in a single play fails to advert to the political government under which they lived : if not in set statements, yet at any rate in his favourite short and pointed maxims. For boastful Demos had become far more exacting than in Aeschylus' and Sophocles' times, and did not easily forgive the neglect of any opportunity to give him a flattering word. Euripides humoured this craving to the full, assuredly to the great injury of his tragedy : we can readily believe the statement that this was the main reason why in the *Andromache* he almost entirely disregarded the real story of the play, touching and pathetic as it was, and directed his main efforts to loading Sparta with contumely : and also why, in *The Suppliants*, he extravagantly praises democratic government, and only
 589 superficially touches on the piteous and tragic story. As for the glorification of Athens in the *Medea*, this, though irrelevant, I am almost inclined to condone and pass over : for whom does not the splendid lyric win with its charm ?—

Heroes of Erechtheus' race,
 To the Gods who owe your birth,
 And in a long succession trace
 Your sacred origin from earth.¹

Indeed, I hardly know whether it be not unjust to call them irrelevant : since the poet by 'a happy key-note', as it is called, joined them with the fortunes of *Medea* :

For its holy streams renowned
 Can that city, can that state
 Where friendship's generous traces are found,
 Shelter thee from public hate,
 When, defiled with horrid guilt,
 Thou thy children's blood hast spilt ?
 Think on this atrocious deed
 Ere thy dagger aim the blow.

¹ *Medea*, 820 (824) (Wodhull).

I add this caution ; even frigid and ill-timed speeches in a tragedy are not invariably to be condemned. For it may well be that even at some serious moment there is present some foolish and garrulous person whose trivialities nevertheless contribute not a little to the total effect of the pathos : for the very contrast makes the situation harder to bear, and makes it jar more upon our feelings : just as it has been remarked that squalid hovels and all the uncleanly sights of small cottage yards by their very propinquity lend a heightened melancholy to the ruins of churches or palaces. On this ground we may find excuse for many passages, both in Shakespeare and in Euripides, which would otherwise seem irrelevant and insipid : such as these lines assigned to the Theban herald in the *Suppliants*, who towards the end of a speech pours out an astounding wealth of proverbs :

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It behoves

Those who are wise to love their children first,
 Their aged parents next, and native land,
 Whose growing fortunes they are bound t' improve,
 And not dismember it. In him who leads
 A host, or pilot stationed at the helm,
 Rashness is dangerous : he who by discretion
 His conduct regulates desists in time,
 And caution I esteem the truest valour.¹

'What is the good of all this,' it may be asked : 'it is 590 neither relevant nor essentially novel ?' I apprehend, however, that these lines were inserted so that, by contrast, the soldierly dignity and regal wisdom of Theseus might stand out and make the more striking impression. The same purpose may well be served by the well-known speech of this same Theseus, though over-long and far-fetched, which he delivers not far from the beginning of the play concerning the advantage and benefits of civil life :

¹ *Suppl.* 508 (Wodhull).

For some there are who say the ills which wait
 On man exceed his joys ; but I maintain
 The contrary opinion, that our lives
 More bliss than woe experience.¹

Might not the king, astute as he was, well speak thus, just like statesmen, who cannot decently refrain from speech and yet cannot afford to buoy up their petitioners with over-sanguine expectation? So though their speech may be sometimes trivial they are not really trifling or wasting time.

By means of such considerations as these, an advocate of Euripides may often win a verdict for him: though, at the same time, much, not to say a great deal, will remain which we are compelled to allow is simply the outcome of want of due effort. The same thing may be said with regard to his choral songs (which is the second ground of accusation): indeed, with regard to them I think that, relying on the authority of Aristotle, it may be said even more confidently. Aristotle, we know, in express words on this score assigns superiority to Sophocles: 'The chorus,' he says, 'should be considered as one of the persons in the drama: should be a part of the whole and a sharer in the action: not as in Euripides, but as in Sophocles. As for other poets—their choral songs have no more connexion with their subject than with that of any other tragedy.'² Observe that, with the exception of Sophocles, fault is found with all poets, that in their choral songs they stray from the central subject and introduce any song they may have in their desk, which seems likely to catch the public ear by its brilliance or melody. Who can deny the
 591 truth of the charge? and yet on this score, too, I deprecate any rash stricture upon great writers: I would not that readers should immediately be quite so sure that the whole

¹ *Suppl.* 198 (Wodhull).

² *Poet.* c. 32 (Twining).

scheme and method of a great poem lie revealed to them after one hasty perusal. You and I, with our blunt perception, may fail to see any harmony in the piece, but it does not follow that it is not there. Take as an example the well-known lyric, the first choral song in the *Hecuba* : you could scarcely find any more beautiful and yet less appropriate to its exact context. For at the moment when our minds are wrought to highest pitch at the vision of Polyxena's approaching end, while Hecuba lies before us fainting on the ground, the Maiden Chorus bursts forth with some light, youthful strain, their sole pre-occupation being as to which of the Greek isles they themselves will be sent as captives :

Ye breezes, who the ships convey,
That long becalmed at anchor lay,
Nor dared to quit the strand;
As the swift keel divides the wave,
Say whither am I borne a slave.¹

What, I would like to know, has this to do with Hecuba ? nevertheless, even this chorus, unless I mistake, is not entirely without justification. May not the poet have intended to emphasize the common human experience, that amid gravest catastrophes affecting those near and dear to them, men still have leisure for their own cares, even the most trivial ? Or again, may he not have intended to let ears dazed by the fatal news find relief in calmer sounds, just as Homer and the Homeric writers delight, in the very thick of battle, to interpose some pleasing simile, to revive the mind by memories of river or wood or even of a life of quiet repose ? In short, it may again and again be shown in such cases that the detail which annoys us is either well in keeping with some character in the play, or is introduced for the sake of some pleasing diversion and variety.

¹ *Hec.* 444 (Wodhull).

But while these are, in many instances, not without excuse, nevertheless, the common reproach against Euripides, that at times there is much that is trivial both in his songs and in his arguments, can, I confess, by such means be extenuated merely, not entirely removed. Are we therefore to decide that he is to be wholly banished from the ranks of those who are true and primary poets? Consider, I beg, what this would involve. If we are too exacting in this respect, and require a standard of perfection, I very much fear that we must cast out Shakespeare himself from that glorious company. No one has ventured, I suppose, to deny that Shakespeare can by no means be absolved from this failing, being wont, as he is, even in connexion with gravest affairs, to play sometimes with words or syllables, sometimes with subtlety of idea and expression. Hence, we are taught that while stigmatizing a poet as overmuch given to such triflings, we should take care not immediately to adjudge him to be wanting in the force and fire of true poetry. Let us, then, press on in considering the case of Euripides, and proceed, after all this, to see what is to be said on the other side. For I purposely pass over, for the present, those other charges—serious enough though they are—that he assails with excessive freedom and bitterness both the character of women and the due worship of the Gods, inasmuch as I have good confidence that under either head I may be able to exhibit amply sufficient reasons for praising him.

What then, gentlemen, are we to assign as the peculiar and surpassing merit of Euripides? in what region, beyond all others, are we to seek the hidden sources of his poetic power? And here I have no esoteric secret to tell: nothing, indeed, which has not been repeated from age to age: I only claim in Aristotle's own words that he stands pre-eminent as 'the most tragic of all poets'.¹ In laying down

¹ *Poet.* 26 (Twining).

this opinion, that acute critic, as I apprehend, had in view that aim and end of Tragedy which he had himself previously defined, namely, that its purpose was to purge men's feeling and affections by the influences of fear and pity. Now there is a universal agreement that no tragedian in any age penetrated more intimately to the secret springs of sorrow and compassion than the creator of Hecuba, of Iphigenia, and of the peerless Alcestis. This was largely due to the transcendent humanity of the man, holding, as he did, nothing to be beneath his interest. 593

Whatever wild desires have swell'd the breast,
Whatever passions have the soul possest :
Joy, Sorrow, Fear, Love, Hatred, Transport, Rage,
Shall form the motley subject of my page.¹

But, in truth, he occupies himself more readily, as a rule, with the affairs of homely life than with heroic actions : makes no search for lofty or deep subjects ; loiters instinctively in the beaten track and the common avenues of life. One might say that he was the Socrates among the Muses' friends, seeking to bring Poetry, as that sage did Philosophy, from sky and cloud down to our daily life.

Of this quality we have, beyond question, wonderful proof in his *Andromache*. On mere mention of this woman's name, who does not at once divine that there will be a violent outburst of bitterest passion, that heaven and earth are bound to join together in the outcry : since she whom we shall see is *Andromache* the wife of *Hector*, resigned to the wooings of *Pyrhus*, bereft of the son she had borne to *Hector*, far from her native land, performing the duties of a servant ? On the contrary, the only fear which seems to touch her to the quick is the fear inspired by the presence of her rival *Hermione*. Yet she is not so forgetful of past times but that once, in set song, she complains :

¹ *Juv.* i. 86 (Gifford).

In Helen sure, to Troy's imperial towers
 Young Paris wafted no engaging bride,
 But when he led her to those nuptial bowers
 Some fiend infernal crossed the billowy tide.¹

But after that she has no thoughts but for present things. And all these, indeed, she laments just as any simple matron might: one is hardly conscious of the queen, the wife of Hector, the daughter-in-law of Priam, in a single
 594 line that she speaks. This is how she upbraids Hermione, as any woman might, and in a way that almost borders on comedy:

Not beauty, but the virtues,
 O woman, to the partners of our bed
 Afford delight. But if it sting your pride
 That Sparta's a vast city, while you treat
 Scyros with scorn, amidst the poor display
 Your riches, and of Menelaus speak
 As greater than Achilles; hence your lord
 Abhors you.²

Well, then; are we to say that the tragic poet intentionally introduced these trivial and almost comic sentences that he might picture for us the mind and spirit of the most nobly born of women as crushed by stress of grief? We know well that the spirit may sometimes be miserably shaken by long-continued daily sorrow, and that, little by little, the fine aroma of its nobility may, as it were, dissipate in thin air: and especially when the sufferer undergoes the humiliation of servitude. If we may believe Homer:

For whom Jove dooms to servitude, he takes
 At once the half of that man's worth away.³

Either, therefore, we must conclude that Euripides deliberately intended to represent a weak and degenerate Andromache; or (and this is in my opinion more probable)

¹ *Androm.* 103 (Wodhull).

² *Androm.* 207 (Wodhull).

³ *Od.* xvii. 322 (Cowper).

the poet is here true to himself, and prefers that the emotions and manners of all his creations should be modelled on ordinary lives lived in private and retirement. The popular view was that he at times was at fault in this and overshot the mark: though Aristophanes must not be too hastily accepted as an entirely trustworthy witness of the feeling of the Greeks in his own time. Certainly, there is no charge he enforces more severely against Euripides than that he represents his heroes and heroines in the hour of their sorrow as wearing mean rags and uttering unworthy speeches:

When you brought forth your kings, in a villainous
fashion,
In patches and rags, as a claim for compassion.

He has taught every soul to sophisticate truth;
And debauch'd all the bodies and minds of the youth.¹

Assuredly, Euripides seems to have willingly sacrificed, 595 not only polished phrase, but even the signs of a lofty spirit, rather than admit the least swerving from the simple and unvarnished truth of things: and to such degree, that one may perhaps not unfairly say as to the whole body and range of his poetry, what, as tradition goes, he himself urged in extenuation of the quality of his characters: namely, that he had painted them as in deed and truth they are; Sophocles as they ought to be.

Connected, however, with this same quality of direct simplicity is the care which Euripides again and again exhibits in sketching those experiences which are peculiarly associated with the lot of the poor, of servants, indeed of slaves. He is wont to let it be seen, and clearly does so not without a kind of satisfaction, that he is able to sympathize with these classes in a high degree. For instance,

¹ *Ran.* 1095-1101 (1063-9) (Frere).

observe the spirit with which Andromache's maid finally undertakes a hazardous mission on her behalf. At first she had opposed the scheme, arguing just as a slave would :

'Twere dangerous : for Hermione is watchful.¹

Andromache then reproaches her :

Dost thou perceive the danger and renounce
Thy friends in their distress ?

The maid, thus pressed, replies nobly :

Not thus ; forbear
To brand me with so infamous a charge.

Yet she adds something withal, which thoroughly savours of a slave's feelings :

I go ; for of small value is the life
(Whate'er befall me) of a female slave.

Which of us has not now and then heard poor and discontented men give vent among themselves to complaints like this !

Remember, again, the bold words of Theseus' slave about the dying Hippolytus. Do they not combine a 596 certain outspokenness with a tone of servility, in a way wonderfully characteristic of men of his degree ?

Though I indeed, O king, am in your house
A servant, yet I never can be brought
To think your son was with such guilt defiled,
Though the whole race of women should expire
Suspended in the noose, and every pine
On Ida's summit were with letters filled ;
So well am I convinced that he was virtuous.²

And since, in our present discussion, mention has been made more than once of Shakespeare, it will be interesting to examine whether, in this connexion, there may not be a marked bond of community between him and Euripides :

¹ *Androm.* 86 (Wodhull).

² *Hipp.* 1263 (1249) (Wodhull).

I mean that each of them touches with ready interest on the fortunes and feelings of men of lowliest rank and circumstance. There is, however, this difference between them : Shakespeare, whenever he was so minded, could always rise from such interest to any heights he pleased : with Euripides, on the other hand, if we have rightly read his mind, this was the only sphere which he felt to be really his own : his real mastery lay in dealing with those emotions which are naturally common to all men and all conditions of worldly fortune. In his plays it is not Medea, Alcestis, Iphigenia, and others who speak, but any mother, any wife, any daughter. We feel that each character is strongly moved, but nevertheless, only with such sort of emotion as all have experienced who have love for child, husband, or parent. Even those exquisite lines in which Medea bids farewell to her sons, whom she herself is dooming to destruction, do not suggest anything which specially pertains either to Colchis, or an enchantress, or even to her own savage temperament : they simply, as I apprehend, breathe a mother's tenderest love :

To my sons

Fain would I say : ' O stretch forth your right hands,
 Ye children, for your mother to embrace.
 O dearest hands, ye lips to me most dear,
 Engaging features and ingenuous looks, 597
 May ye be blest, but in another world ;
 For by the treacherous conduct of your sire
 Are ye bereft of all this earth bestowed.
 Farewell, sweet kisses—tender limbs, farewell !
 And fragrant breath ! I never more can bear
 To look on you, my children.' My afflictions
 Have conquered me.¹

Neither, again, does the speech of the sorrowing Admetus, but just bereft of his loved spouse, exhibit any quality

¹ *Medea*, 1065 (1069) (Wodhull).

which might not equally become any husband soever who had chanced to survive his wife :

How shall I bear
To enter here ? To whom shall I address
My speech ? Whose greeting renders my return
Delightful ? Which way shall I turn ? Within
In lonely sorrow shall I waste away,
As widowed of my wife I see my couch,
The seats deserted where she sate, the rooms
Wanting her elegance. Around my knees
My children hang, and weep their mother lost :
These too lament their mistress now no more.¹

We shall all allow that these are most sweet and tender lines : and the more so, perhaps, since any one with a fairly long experience must have often witnessed in real life the same or similar scenes. And finally, take the notable instance of Iphigenia in Aulis, what expressions, in her most pathetic address, does she employ, other than those which might well become any daughter greeting her father when first seen after long separation :

Iph. Would it offend my mother, should I run
And throw myself into my father's arms ?

My father, to thy arms I wish to run,
Clasped to thy bosom ; dear to me thy sight
After such absence : be not angry with me.

Ag. Enjoy thy wish : of all my children thou
Hast of thy father always been most fond.

Iph. Absent so long, with joy I look on thee.

Well hast thou done to bring me to thy presence.

Ag. If well or not well done, I cannot say.

Iph. A gloom hangs on thee 'midst thy joy to see
me.

Ag. A king and chief hath many anxious cares.

Iph. But let me have thee now : think not of cares.²

598 And much more there is in like spirit : and the main purpose

¹ *Alc.* 962 (941) (Potter).

² *Iph. in Aul.* 634 (Potter).

of it all is, as any one may perceive, that the simple evidence of a child's affection expressing itself in well-known phrases, should keenly sting and cut to the heart Agamemnon, who at the very moment was planning acts far other than befit a loved and honoured father.

The result is, as I said, to show that Euripides' province and power specially lay within the affairs of home life and with the affections which each feels for those who are near and dear to him : for there is an almost universal consent that the strongest case to be made out for him rests upon his Medea, Alcestis, Iphigenia, and other like characters.

Seeing that we have been led to the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, let us examine briefly how it is that, in the judgement of no less a critic than Aristotle, her character seemed so inconsistent : he has chosen her as his one instance of what he calls 'inconsistency of character' ; 'for the Iphigenia who supplicates for her life has no resemblance to the Iphigenia of the conclusion of the play.'¹ And why does he so say ? Because, I apprehend, she who, when we first see her, was of more sensitive disposition—for she makes no scruple of pleading with tears and all a woman's appeals against the fatal decree—this very same Iphigenia, afterwards willingly and joyfully, not to say voluntarily, offers herself as a sacrifice : she steadfastly refuses the certain and invincible aid of Achilles : and yet no reason seems to be given for so sudden a change of mind : there is no persuasion by friends, no change of fortune, no trace, I do not say of a *deus ex machina*, of which in like junctures Euripides affords many instances, but not even of any suggestion prompted to her mind from heaven. Just consider the following :

Hear then what to my mind
Deliberate thought presents. It is decreed

¹ *Poet.* c. 28.

For me to die : this then I wish, to die
 With glory, all reluctance banished far.
 My mother, weigh this well, that what I speak
 Is honour's dictate. All the powers of Greece
 Have now their eyes on me ; on me depends
 The sailing of the fleet, the fall of Troy,
 And not to suffer, should a new attempt
 Be dared, the rude barbarians from blest Greece
 To bear in future times her dames by force.

599 By dying all these things shall I achieve,
 And blest, for that I have delivered Greece,
 Shall be my fame. To be too fond of life
 Becomes not me ; nor for thyself alone,
 But to all Greece a blessing, didst thou bear me.
 Shall thousands, when their country's injured, lift
 Their shields, shall thousands grasp the oar, and dare,
 Advancing bravely 'gainst the foe, to die
 For Greece ? And shall my life, my single life
 Obstruct all this ?

Vain the attempt : for Greece I give my life.
 Slay me, demolish Troy : for these shall be
 Long time my monuments, my children these,
 My nuptials, and my glory.¹

I have quoted this passage at unusual length, since it certainly seems to me that it carries with it the explanation of Iphigenia's attitude, and turns the reproach of inconsistency into a high honour. May it not have been that, at so grave a crisis, when decision must be made in so short a time, when the presence of the immortal gods seemed all around her, such thoughts as these might spring up unprompted in a high-born maiden's mind ? Especially as we see good reason to believe that her previous tearful, and even (if she will pardon the word) abject, appeal was not entirely due to her own promptings. For I assuredly so infer, when I read and re-read her most touching little address :

¹ *Iph. in Aul.* 1385 (Potter).

Had I, my father, the persuasive voice
 Of Orpheus, and his skill to charm the rocks
 To follow me, and soothe whom e'er I please
 With winning words, I would make trial of it ;
 But I have nothing to present thee now
 Save tears, my only eloquence ; and those
 I can present thee.¹

While these are certainly most exquisitely beautiful lines, I am not sure, notwithstanding, that they do not suggest something of the rhetorician's art, in which Euripides is said to have been trained from his earliest years. A high-born maiden might well deliver herself of such a prologue : if we rightly infer that she spoke not from her own heart, but as tutored by her mother. Then rapidly warming, as was natural, through the mere current and rapid rush of her words, she bursts forth in the following lines, far more consonant with Nature and with truth :

I was the first
 To call thee father, me thou first didst call
 Thy child ; I was the first that on thy knees
 Fondly caressed thee, and from thee received
 The fond caress ; this was thy speech to me :
 ' Shall I, my child, e'er see thee in some house
 Of splendour, happy in thy husband, live,
 And flourish, as becomes my dignity ? '
 My speech to thee was, leaning 'gainst thy cheek,
 Which with my hand I now caress : ' And what
 Shall I then do for thee ? Shall I receive
 My father when grown old, and in my house
 Cheer him with each fond office, to repay
 The careful nurture which he gave my youth ? '
 These words are on my memory deep impressed ;
 Thou hast forgot them, and wilt kill thy child.

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But what are we to make of these concluding lines ?—

I will sum all in this, which shall contain
 More than long speech : To view the light of life

¹ *Iph. in Aul.* 1222 (Potter).

To mortals is most sweet, but all beneath
 Is nothing : of his senses is he reft
 Who hath a wish to die ; for life, though ill,
 Excels whate'er there is of good in death.

Assuredly this is too stiff and stilted : unless, indeed, as I just hinted, we believe Iphigenia not to have been playing her own natural part, and thus hardly well knowing what it became her to say at such a time.

But, after all, suppose we grant that the end does not well agree with the beginning : are men in real life always consistent ? Are not their minds often swayed hither and thither by the very slightest influences, and this in the most important affairs ? And, seeing that Euripides declined to follow the school of dramatists who exalt their leading characters to a plane above that of ordinary humanity, we may well assume that he advisedly allowed his Iphigenia to be changeable and inconsistent. Indeed, there was no other way by which he could carry out his primary aim, of reproducing the very forms and features of men and affairs, as they all appear daily in real life. The theory of his Hermione in the *Andromache* does not indeed bear this out : she was in truth a poor frivolous creature who, in her first appearance on the stage, plainly shows that she could be taken captive by the charms of gems and robes :

601 The gorgeous ornaments of gold these brows
 Encircling, and the tissued robes I wear,
 I from Achilles', or from Peleus' stores,
 As chosen presents when I hither came,
 Received not, but from Sparta's realm ; these gifts
 My father Menelaus hath bestowed
 With a large dower.¹

Yet even her sudden remorse, which is an essential feature of the play, is by no means without weight for those who

¹ *Androm.* 147 (Wodhull).

seek to trace the hidden springs of Euripides' poetry. And the same thing may be remarked of the two Atridae in the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and of other like instances. Numerous details declare with no uncertain meaning, that he delighted in dealing with the common round of daily life, and with those personal and domestic incidents which touch the hearts of most men. One side of his thoughts perhaps may be excepted, that which regards religion: and I will, to the best of my powers, draw out the special points which are peculiar to Euripides on this theme; but before doing so, I will add a few words to prove that his views about women were not so unkindly as they have been thought. For it is here, specially, that certain critics relentlessly impeach him.

Now, first, it surely must seem surprising that a poet who took pre-eminent interest in all that relates to the life of home and everyday pursuits and cares, should at the same time have hated from the bottom of the heart those upon whom all the conditions and circumstances of that home life depend. In the next place, I would recommend any who have been taught this old criticism, to look a little more minutely into his plays, and especially to compare them with those of Sophocles. And in order to narrow the discussion within definite lines, let us take as our test that character by whom Sophocles may most completely support his own claims in this region. Let us compare his Antigone with the same character as drawn by Euripides in his *Phoenissae*. The former certainly impresses us more powerfully by her strength and nobility of spirit: but the latter touches us far more pleasingly in that she shows a deeply affectionate feeling for her brother, and that in 602 a way which implies much more than it expresses. Especially striking, from this point of view, is the dialogue between the royal maiden and the old serving-man as they catch sight of the Argive lines from their watch-tower. First,

like a girl, she is much taken with the mere glitter of arms from afar :

Thou venerable daughter of Latona,
Thrice sacred Goddess Hecate, how gleams
With brazen armour the whole field around !¹

Then, womanlike, she betrays anxiety as to whether the gates are closed :

Are the gates closed ? what barriers guard the walls
Reared by Amphion's skill ?

Finally, after much eager curiosity, just such as might possess a young girl on the occasion, she suddenly lets fall a remark as to her brother :

But where is he, whom Fate
Decreed in evil hour from the same womb
With me to spring ? Say, O thou dear old man,
Where 's Polynices ?²

But when he is pointed out she almost fails to recognize him, as is so natural with those who after a long separation try to recognize from afar those very dear to them :

Att. See you him ?
Ant. I see him,

But not distinctly ; I can just discern
A faint resemblance of that kindred form,
The image of that bosom.

And then she bursts forth in tenderest strain :

Would to heaven,
Borne on the skirts of yonder passing cloud,
Through the ethereal paths, I with these feet
Could to my brother urge my swift career !
Then would I fling my arms round the dear neck
Of him who long hath been a wretched exile.

Even at such a juncture she cannot restrain a woman's delight in the splendour of his armour :

¹ *Phoen.* 107 (Wodhull).

² *Phoen.* 157 (Wodhull).

How gracefully, in golden arms arrayed,
Bright as Hyperion's radiant beams, he moves !

After this scene we hear absolutely nothing of her until 603 she appears, when called by her mother, just as her brothers are met in fatal combat. Here she still maintains her maidenly modesty, shrinking from coming out from her chamber before the gaze of men, especially in the midst of an array of soldiery :

Ant. What more hast thou, O mother, to relate ?

Joc. Naught that can give thee joy, but follow me.

Ant. Say whither must I go, and leave behind
My virgin comrades ?

Joc. To the host.

Ant. I blush

To mingle with the crowd.

Joc. These bashful fears

Are such as in thy present situation

Become thee not.

Ant. How can my help avail ?

Joc. Thou haply mayst appease this impious strife
Betwixt thy brothers.

Ant. Mother, by what means ?

Joc. By falling prostrate at their knees with me.

Ant. Lead on betwixt the van of either host,
This crisis will admit of no delay.¹

She shows herself brave and patient : yet traces of a true woman can be seen throughout. I will only add one more passage, but it makes a noble picture : in the scene where she prepares to go into exile with her blind father, he protests that she ought not so abruptly to forsake her long familiar haunts and her circle of friends, nor, most important of all, the holy shrines of the native Deities :

Oedip. To Bacchus' temple then
Repair, on that steep mountain where no step
Profane invades his orgies, chosen haunt
Of his own Maenades.²

¹ *Phoen.* 1289 (Wodhull).

² *Phoen.* 1765 (Wodhull).

His daughter at once, as though inspired with the memory of her childhood, exclaims :

Erst in the hides
Of Theban stags arrayed, I on these hills
Joined in the dance of Semele, bestowing
A homage they approved not on the gods.

And with these words she finally disappears with Oedipus from the scene, to become his guide and comrade : and assuredly, had Euripides but left this single witness for himself, he would have ample ground for alleging that he was not utterly hostile and unkindly in his judgement of women.

And so I pass over Iphigenia, Alcestis, and many others who might be quoted in support of my view : and will say a few words concerning Polyxena : inasmuch as I am
604 afraid Euripides may not, in his portrayal of her character, very well correspond to the view I take of the whole class. Remember this is what is suggested : that in his poetry those feelings and affections which are common to humanity predominate, no stress whatever being laid upon those who may be called aristocrats ; nor upon the heroic character : the standard being always that of our daily life and common feelings. But Polyxena, if any one, seems to rise to higher things :

O ye Argives, who laid waste
My city, willingly I die ; let no man
Confine these arms, I with undaunted breast
Will meet the stroke. I by the gods conjure you
Release, and slay me as my rank demands
Like one born free : for I from mighty kings
Descend, and in the shades beneath should blush
To be accounted an ignoble slave.¹

A magnificent speech truly : but observe, pray, the real explanation of her desire for death : she had, in fact,

¹ *Hec.* 547 (Wodhull).

before declared that she desired to die, since her lot in life was unhappy :

for no hope,

No ground for thinking I shall e'er be happy,
Can I discern.¹

Without doubt this is a reason which was really influencing her : though it is not so splendid or heroic.

Besides, we must not forget that Polyxena is purposely put forward as the type and example of her noble house. Thus the Chorus commends her as follows :

A great distinction, and among mankind
The most conspicuous, is to spring from sires
Renowned for virtue : generous souls hence raise
To heights sublimer an ennobled name.²

anulâra

But it is very seldom that poets praise, thus, in set words, the things they really hold especially dear : in dealing with them one only feels throughout the presence of a subtle passion which runs through the whole character, pervades the whole man with a kind of aroma, yet hardly ever can be openly stated. So that the question stands as it did at first : the character of Polyxena does not 605 require us to modify the general principle concerning the main quality of Euripides' poetry, already set forth.

But how did it happen, then, that the opinion has prevailed so long that he attacked the whole female sex with a kind of hatred, not to say savage ferocity ? In the first place, we all know, that in his tragedies there can be found many passages almost akin to comedy, wherein the ills of domestic life are stigmatized, as a comedian would do, with bitter speeches : but then, if any one thinks to construe these with strict literalness, taking no account of what is called irony, assuredly he proves himself but a poor student both of literature and of life. For instance (I take the first passage which presents itself on turning over the

¹ *Hec.* 370 (Wodhull).

² *Hec.* 379 (Wodhull).

plays), we have, in the *Andromache*, these expressions of Hermione :

But never, never (I this truth repeat)
Should wedded men, who have the gift of reason,
Let women have a free access and visit
Their consort. For they teach her evil lessons.¹

Can any one fail to perceive that complaints like this should be appraised according to the situation, the temper and character of the speaker? And this is a principle which may be generally applied.

Further (for I will boldly declare what I think), how if the temperament of Euripides was such that he deliberately chose this theme as the one in which he loved to indulge his humour and employ that irony of which we spoke?

Certainly, so far as one may conjecture, he was, if not a follower, at least a hearty admirer, of an ascetic type of life : indeed, he was a disciple of two philosophers of great distinction, Anaxagoras and Prodicus. It is said, too, that, when he was a youth, he underwent athletic discipline : and perhaps his poems evince some evidence of his proficiency in it, as, for instance, where he describes, 606 with careful minuteness, the celebrated final conflict of the sons of Oedipus.² Well, we all know that the gymnasium is pre-eminently the school of self-control and purity of life :

The youth who runs for prizes wisely trains,
Bears cold and heat, is patient and abstains.³

And he was also, undeniably, a most refined and critical observer of human life, especially on its domestic and social side. Now it would be strange if one who aimed at associating such a philosophy as we have indicated with

¹ *Androm.* 943 (Wodhull); cf. *Medea*, 408.

² *Phoen.* 1392, &c.

³ *Hor. A. P.* 413 (Conington).

such careful criticism did not prove a somewhat strict censor of men and life : and the wiser of such critics are wont to blunt the edge of their criticisms by some sort of irony, which shows itself in an endless number of ways all marvellously differing from each other : and among them all, why may not anything whatsoever which Euripides has scornfully urged against women fairly find place ?

But it may be asked, has Euripides himself shown any evidence of being the kind of man disposed to cultivate an austere discipline and, as it is called nowadays, the ascetic life ? Well, he has, and that abundantly : at all events, if we do not wholly mistake the meaning and spirit of his *Hippolytus*. Euripides worked up this character, unless I mistake, with a peculiar pleasure : he put his whole heart into it, as Homer did into Achilles or Apelles into his Venus. For poets, like painters, are somehow able, even without conscious effort, to achieve what they aim at with great facility when they touch parts of their work which they themselves hold dear : their touch at once becomes more delicate : a happier instinct guides them where to add, where to withhold, another stroke. Consider, I beg, whether *Hippolytus*' first entrance on the stage and all the details of the pure offerings due to Diana do not furnish some support to what I say :

To deck thee, I this wreath, O goddess, bear,
Cropt from yon mead, o'er which no swain his flock
For pasture drives, nor hath the mower's steel
Despoiled its virgin herbage ; 'midst each flower
Which spring profusely scatters, there the bee
Roams unmolested, and religious awe
Waters the champaign with abundant springs.¹

And then he declares that these sacred rites are reserved 607
alone for those naturally upright and pure : even penitents
can gain no access there :

¹ *Hipp.* 73 (Wodhull).

They who owe naught to learning, but have gained
 From nature wisdom such as never fails
 In their whole conduct, are by Heaven allowed
 To cull these sweets, not so the wretch profane.

But I hesitate to suggest what source should be assigned to the lines which follow, so weighty are they, so chaste, so holy : so nearly approaching the majesty of the Scriptures :

Vouchsafe, O dearest goddess, to receive
 This braided fillet for thy golden hair,
 From me a pious votary, who alone
 Of all mankind am for thy worship meet,
 For I with thee reside, with thee converse,
 Hearing thy voice indeed, though I thy face
 Have never seen. My life as it began,
 May I with spotless purity conclude !

This seems (I speak with all reverence) to foreshadow as if from afar that divine sentence : THE PURE IN HEART SHALL SEE GOD. Whence, too, comes that language, more impressive than that of any moral philosopher, with which he inveighs against those who meditate base deeds ?—

thus, vile wretch,
 In privacy you came, with me to form
 An impious treaty for surrendering up
 My royal father's unpolluted bed.
 Soon from such horrors in the limpid spring
 My ears will I make pure : how could I rush
 Into the crime itself, when, having heard
 Only the name made mention of, I feel
 As though I some defilement thence had caught ? ¹

And this, too, which, in a Greek, is the height of severity of life :

but I am not eager
 To look on these, for still my soul retains
 Its virgin purity.²

And then, in his extreme agony, when at the point of

¹ *Hipp.* 656 (651) (Wodhull).

² *Hipp.* 1006 (Wodhull).

death, he is cheered by nothing so much as by the dim sense of the presence of the Goddess of Purity :

From celestial lips
How doth a fragrant odour breathe around !
Amid my sufferings thee did I perceive,
The pangs I feel were instantly assuaged,
Diana sure is here.¹

But let us observe how both the friends who advise 608 Hippolytus, and those who, like his angry father, load him with reproaches, alike resort to arguments such as, even to-day, are urged against those who aim at a stricter religious life. First there is the sagacious old family retainer :

Know you the law prescribed to man ?

.
To loathe that pride which studies not to please.²
Afterwards the enraged Theseus taunts him for fasting for religion's sake :

Yet art thou the man
Who holds familiar converse with the gods
As though his life were perfect ? Art thou chaste
And pure from all defilement ?
Now glory in thy vegetable food,
Disciple of the tuneful Orpheus, rave
With Bacchus' frantic choir, and let the fumes
Of varied learning soothe thee.

But lest it be imagined that Hippolytus is placed before us as an example of a perverted disposition, which should clearly be avoided, observe with what sweet graces the poet adorns his austere morality. Who more reverential towards a father than Hippolytus ?—

nor is it just,
My father, your afflictions to conceal
From friends, and those who are yet more than
friends.⁴

¹ *Hipp.* 1407 (1392) (Wodhull).

² *Hipp.* 91 (Wodhull).

³ *Hipp.* 961 (948) (Wodhull).

⁴ *Hipp.* 927 (915) (Wodhull).

And finally, on the eve of death, not only does he refrain from reproaches against Theseus, but even shows himself more concerned for his father's grief than his own agony :

Hipp. I bewail my sire.

Diana. Him by her arts that goddess hath misled.

Hipp. To you, my father, this event hath proved
A source of woes abundant.

Yet more for you, who have been thus deluded,
Than for myself I grieve.¹

Moreover, just as in the *Hippolytus*, the praises of chastity, so in the *Ion* are sung those of that solitude and retirement which those who are dedicated for life to serve in holy temples and divine things enjoy, provided they themselves are holy and sanctified. At early dawn
609 the youthful *Ion* betakes himself with joyous eagerness to his religious duty : wreathes sprays of laurel : repels by his cries the persistent birds : cleanses the paved floor of the shrine : sprinkles water : sings a paean of praise : and takes such joy in his office as to protest he would not change it for regal wealth and Athens' splendid towers :

I deem my situation here exceeds
What Athens can bestow.²

Finally, in the *Bacchae*, Euripides' aim seems to have been to exalt the characteristic mystery, which so deeply pervades all divine things : and to impress on us that nothing in religion is to be held of light account, simply because its justification is not immediately apparent or does not readily commend itself to the mere human sense.

I much wish that time would permit me to illustrate all this by instances drawn from the *Ion* and *Bacchae*, as in the case of the *Hippolytus*. But I must be content to offer and leave with you this simple outline, so that any who desire it may have a standard by which to test our general

¹ *Hipp.* 1422 (1405) (Wodhull).

² *Ion*, 657 (645) (Wodhull).

a drama
only as
rrible as
epus
220
could
be
mired
among worshippers of Bacchus.

view of Euripides. If it shall appear not wholly groundless, at all events the poet may be thereby relieved from the charge, which, as I have remarked, has been fixed upon him by some critics of highest authority. He will prove to have been no scoffer at divine things. We shall see clearly that any unbridled expressions which he has at times used on this theme are partly due to the character of the speaker in whose mouth they are put, and partly to the fact that he is, like Plato, only criticizing the popular fancies about the Gods. Indeed, he often seems to handle all those stories of the base lusts of the Gods, of their blind rage, of their mutual jealousies, as if he held them not so much to be inventions of the fancy, as to have been in deed and truth at some time the work of some evil spirits. Unless I mistake, this is the theory which throws most light on the Venus of the *Hippolytus* and perhaps the Apollo of the *Ion*. *and why not on the Dionysus of the Bac.*

In result, therefore, we enroll Euripides among that order of poets who have drawn from their own native resources the song they have given us : inasmuch as he is the champion and protector of the common human feelings ; and yet at the same time shows and cherishes a special affection for those who, since they are servants of the gods, hold it a duty to reserve themselves body and soul to service of the divine office, despising pleasures and withdrawing from affairs.

Concerning poets who sing the praises of country life : these have been later in date than the great poets of action : and in Greece hardly appeared at all. The reasons of these facts considered : supported and illustrated from Hebrew and Christian literary history : it is maintained that the two orders of poetry flourished naturally and providentially each at its needed and proper time.

I COME now to consider the lovers of the country : for we may call by this distinctive name that other great family of poets whose interest and effort lay, not in the deeds and fortunes of men, but in rivers, in woods, in rocks, and desert regions, in the haunts of beasts and birds : briefly, in all that variety of beauty with which Nature has adorned the face of earth and sky. I do not indeed suppose that these two classes are so capable of being defined and marked off by certain invariable signs, that anybody can at once perceive and declare authoritatively to which order this or that poet ought to be assigned. The conditions of human affairs rarely, if ever, admit of such precise limitation. For it is with Poetry as it is with life and character : each man's disposition and actual circumstances are blended with and influenced by his
 612 external environment, such as the climate and site of his home, and all the array of natural objects which appeal to his eye or ear. I repeat, then, that these two orders are intermingled one with another, so that it is by no means easy with regard to any poet or even any individual to form a clear judgement how far he has intentionally linked himself to the one or other family. Yet, nevertheless, there are not wanting certain dividing lines—and those quite clear enough considering the subject—whereby, if

not individual authors, yet at least classes of authors, may be conveniently marked off from each other.

First of all, it is clear that in the one class men of leisure and retiring temperament, in the other, for the most part, strenuous and active spirits, are to be reckoned. To take an instance familiar even to schoolboys, let us compare for a moment Homer and Virgil. Do we not all immediately recognize that the former must, by Nature's own verdict, be grouped among those who delight in active toil, and the latter with the lovers of calm and tranquillity? Each loves the open-air life : but the one prefers adventure in it, the other peace and quiet.

Then I would add another point, which, indeed, is plain enough to all who but lightly and cursorily glance at what I may call the history of literature. In almost every nation the poetry of strenuous toil, full of movement and action, flourished first : and at a later time there succeeded an aftermath of those whom 'the fields of the country delight and the streams that water the valleys', who 'love the rivers and forests';¹ men who care for leisure, not for renown. Examine all the remains and fragments of poetry—so far indeed as we know of them—that have reached us from rude and uncultivated ages. They will, unless I am mistaken, one and all show the same sequence and range of poetic production. At first all poets sing openly and without reserve the praises of love or war, or celebrate some theme connected with human character and action. It is only as their second love, that the quiet life of the country and all the varied beauty of the world 613 around us come in for praise.

At present, I do not attempt to suggest an explanation of this : I merely wish you to reflect whether the fact be so or not. We have at all events this striking evidence of it, that no single poet, so far as I am aware, arose in

¹ *Georg.* ii. 485.

160.376

ancient Greece who can be supposed to have devoted his chief interest to the charms of Nature. Pastoral poetry, as we call it, appeared some centuries later, and in fact owed its beginnings to Sicily and its finished form to Rome; if, indeed, we may fairly assign that honour to Virgil's *Georgics*, the delight of the Muses and of the world.

But I am conscious here that I must be on my guard lest I should seem to have made an admission which will seriously undermine my own theory. 'What,' it may be said, 'have you not authoritatively denied that any poetry is of true ring except it result from the abundance and overflow of a full heart: and have you not also assigned so ample a field to the art as to declare that it can, unaided, minister to all the movements of the spirit and the various aspects of life? and, in spite of this, do you now assert that the love of country life and rural pursuits, which occupy men's minds to so large an extent, lay neglected and without any to honour it, until, after the decadence of Greek poetry, some Sicilian shepherds composed their poems on this theme? Did men really remain callous through all those centuries, unmoved by the sweetness of spring or the solemnity of autumn? Did they, so long time, "gaze at without fear," as Horace puts it,

The sun, the stars; the seasons of the year
That come and go?¹

614 'No one could credit this for a moment. And therefore you must allow, either that, before Theocritus, there were some who satisfied in song their love of wood and country, or must give up your theory: do not, then, keep advertising poetry as a great panacea: let us, after all, look upon it as merely one art among many, delightful indeed and beautiful as may be, but by no means necessary or touched with any peculiar sanctity.'

¹ Hor. *Ep.* i. 6. 3.

I shall to-day, so far as I am able, deal with this criticism : but shall certainly not seek to shelter myself under the wing of those, though of by no means despicable authority, who deny that among the Greek peoples at large there was any real feeling for the beauty of natural scenery. Such over-subtle critics seem to me to fall into just the same error as if they maintained that musical measure and rhythm could be appreciated by none but such as had been pupils of some professional musician : whereas, on the contrary, merely by listening to the innumerable variety of the sounds with which woods, seas, rivers, and the blended songs of birds, fill our ears, all men who are not wholly unmusical give back the sounds from within, and, with none to teach them, frame for themselves each his own melody. But this fact is overlooked by the ordinary observer who demands some formulated laws of music and of song. We are prepared, therefore, for much the same attitude in those who suppose that Nature was unappreciated in ancient Greece. The fact is that seeing the painter's art highly developed, they demand every poem should show a sort of artistic picture and an ordered arrangement of its parts, with some details kept in the background, others thrown into full relief. And, since this finished nicety is almost entirely absent among the early Greeks, some critics have too hastily concluded that they were wholly wanting in this order of poetry.

But there is no need for me to spend much time upon this subject, after the many various and splendid instances which I have quoted, some from Homer, some from Pindar, and some from the three Tragedians. But even if nothing of this kind had come down to us, would it, I ask, be credible to any one, that a nation which was ever gifted 615 with the finest appreciation of form should have been blind to the charms of Nature and scenery ? and that when the source of pleasure is the same in both ? For

trees quivering before the wind, clouds sailing along the sky, streams coursing down their channel, may be well compared with the gestures of human beings, at all events those of graceful form : and the colours of spring, whether in the skies or in flowers, suggest life and animation. Whence we infer, that whether a man is truly and appreciatively delighted with the beauty of human form or with the face of earth and sky, the feeling arises from the same mental qualities. And therefore we should be slow to believe that a region or an age which produced a Phidias and an Apelles was incapable of being won by the charms of meadows, woods, and rivers.

Then, too, consider the quality and texture of all those fables which the Greeks so greatly affected : were they not wont to frame such fancies and dreams about their Gods and Heroes as show that they themselves led and delighted in leading a life in the open air ? Why,—think of their circles of Nymphs, Dryads, Oreads, and the rest, besides all the inferior gods and goddesses—do they not, for the most part, clearly point to a people who carefully watched Nature's movements ? Indeed, we have no light support for this view from one who is not merely learned and skilled in all that regards country life, but is, moreover, easily the first of modern poets. And this is what that distinguished man says, if I may paraphrase his words : ‘ The whole scheme of the religion of Greece was grounded on the experiences and observation of refined and acute men, who marked as evidence of present Deity all that they witnessed under the sky, by day or night, and felt to be venerable, beautiful, or magnificent. And it followed that they recognized as many Divine Powers as there are aspects of Nature, evoking fear or admiration.

616 A shepherd (for instance) taking his midday rest, lyre in hand, shapes to himself the vision of the great Apollo, with golden cithern and with shining locks : the illusion

being heightened, should he hear, perchance,

A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds
Which his poor skill could make ;

the hunter wandering among the hills by night evokes from the moon and stars the train of Diana and her nymphs : cloud shadows moved by northern breezes across the distant hills suggest to men the circling dances of Oreads : and

withered boughs grotesque, . . .

From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth,

create Faunus and the Satyrs.'¹

But even leaving all this out of the question, I would nevertheless confidently undertake to defend the Greeks in this controversy, by appealing to Plato alone. In the celebrated introduction to the *Phaedrus* he acknowledges having fully yielded himself to the fascination of city life and the conversation of men, yet in such terms as make it clear that he is influenced and delighted, in the highest degree, by pure and simple Nature :

'By Juno, a beautiful retreat. For this plane-tree is very wide-spreading and lofty, and the height and shadiness of this agnus castus are very beautiful, and as it is now at the perfection of its flowering, it makes the spot as fragrant as possible. Moreover, a most agreeable fountain flows under the plane-tree, of very cold water, to judge from its effect on the foot. It appears from these images and statues to be sacred to certain nymphs and to Achelous. Observe again the freshness of the spot, how charming and very delightful it is, and how summer-like and shrill it sounds from the choir of grasshoppers. But the most delightful of all is the grass, which with its gentle slope is naturally adapted to give an easy support to the head, as one reclines.'²

What are we to make of this stress upon the plane-tree, 617 the cool water of Ilissus, the soft grass, and all the array

¹ Based on Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Book IV, ll. 717-44, 851-87.

² *Phaedrus*, 9 (Cary).

of charm in the sweet retreat—but that they plainly evince a temperament delicately appreciating and heartily loving the joyous spring-time ?

So I may dismiss this point : let us see, however, whether there may not be yet another reason which explains the absence of pastoral poetry in the earliest Greek ages. How if I suggest the paradox that such poetry was absent for the very reason that the delights and charms which would inspire it were present in such abundance ? Indeed, as I have more than once insisted, there is no richer fount of poetic inspiration than the unquenchable longing for some object which is absent. Now those great men who were the pride of Greece in its early days all had their rivers and their forests in which to delight : Homer with his lute passed over shore and island, Pindar paid honour to the Delphic deity among the groves and caves and fountains at the foot of Parnassus : while the three Tragedians, like all their fellow citizens, could, in what way each liked, enjoy their own delightful Attica. Moreover, we have a witness, beyond all cavil, as to the affection with which the race regarded their gardens, estates, and pleasant villa retreats—namely, Thucydides : who, writing of the era which saw the rule of Pericles, at the outset of the ill-omened Peloponnesian war, when the Spartan army first set foot in Attica, tells us that nothing troubled the citizens more than that they were obliged to quit the little country holdings so dear to each.

‘ This removal,’ he says, ‘ in respect they had most of them been accustomed to the country life, grieved them very much. This custom was from great antiquity, more familiar with the Athenians than any other of the rest of Greece. . . . The Athenians were, nevertheless, for the custom which most had till the Persian war to live in the country with their whole families, unwilling to remove. It pressed them likewise, and was heavily taken, besides their houses, to leave the things that pertained to their

religion, which, since their old form of government, were become patial, and to change their manner of life, and to be no better than banished every man his city.'¹

Aristophanes gives like evidence, in every comedy making 618 mention of rich fields and meadows, of the well-to-do homesteads, of the old people basking in the sun on festal days, and all the other associations of happy country life. Remember, too, that there was no lack of slaves: so that we need not marvel if Athenian citizens born in a moderate station of life had leisure enough to spend their time in the country.

Thus, just as for Homer and Pindar, so for the Tragedians also, there was no lack of means at hand to satisfy and appease their ardent love of wood and river. No need in such an age of set formal song, while they had full enjoyment in their everyday life of the substance itself. Enough for them, in my opinion, if by means of similes and images, by word and phrase let fall here and there, they repeatedly betrayed their true inner feelings.

But should any one prefer to hold that, even in the earlier ages of Greece, there were poets who deliberately set themselves to praise the beauties of Nature, he will find me very much inclined to agree with him: in spite of the fact that, so far as I am aware, not even the name of a single writer of the kind has survived. But that is a difficulty which, I confess, presses me but little. For certainly, just the same considerations which affected a writer also affected readers: there was nothing or little to stimulate either. There would be little vogue for poets who merely dwelt on pleasures and charms which all men, without any prompting from them, could enjoy to the full. We need not wonder, then, either if great and pre-eminent poets each devoted himself to some other kind of poetry,

¹ *Thucyd.* ii. 14-16 (Hobbes).

or, if any of less note took this as their province, that their work and even their memory has perished.

And we may deal in similar manner with Aristotle, who discusses the whole subject of poetry on the assumption that no one can be rightly and strictly called a poet except one who makes it his task either to narrate or to represent on the stage human actions and the changes and chances of fortune. For I do not apprehend that it was
619 some idiosyncrasy of the philosopher that was the sole reason why he would have us confine an art which is obviously of boundless compass within limits so narrow. It is perhaps true to say that in every subject he impresses us more by the acuteness of his observation than by the delicacy of his touch ; yet he nowhere even hints at his feeling any delight in the charms of Nature and all the beauty of earth and sky. The fact is that, keen observer as he was, he recognized that the whole company of the poets with whom in that day he was acquainted, might be well comprehended within these bounds : and further, as his manner was, he based his judgement about the whole subject on the significance of its name. But, had he lived later than Virgil, who can doubt that he would have extended the limits of true poetry, lest he might seem to exclude so famed a writer ?

I have said what seemed relevant concerning the character and temperament of the Greek nation. But how if I suggest and maintain that the varied forms of poetic work are linked one after another as in a series and rational succession ? I confess, indeed, that I am conscious of some misgiving, whenever I find myself in danger of siding with those who demand an explanation for everything : I appreciate how deceptive and treacherous is this kind of reasoning. So I ask your indulgence, for I shall only be raising a question, not advocating a theory. Are not the conditions of human life such that we generally find

men seeking for their happiness first in action or in the pursuit of truth, and afterwards, when tired and disillusioned, taking refuge in quiet rural retreat, and then beginning to enjoy the wonderful solace which springs from a closer insight into the forms and beauties of Nature? And why may we not suppose that the poetry of the ancients may have developed in a not wholly dissimilar manner? Thus poets like Homer and Pindar first celebrated and handed on such traditions of the heroic age as each had received from those before him. Then Aeschylus the Pythagorean¹ showed the splendid power that lies in high philosophy. Then when each of these fields had been 620 well and thoroughly worked, it remained for a later age to betake itself to the quiet haven, as I have called it, of Nature and the pleasant country-side.

And soon, following in this flight, would be seen men of Homer's school, busy active spirits wearied at last of war or politics; yes, and members of the school of Aeschylus (if I may use the phrase), they too wearying at last of restless and perplexing speculation, tossed hither and thither by the great problems of human life, with no one to say the final word, no clear principle to guide them. 295 Lucretius is a striking example of the one⁺ class, Virgil of the other. Indeed, the essence and spring of the Lucretian muse may be traced to this one simple fact, that the poet gladly and joyously lets himself be drawn up, far above all thought of himself and his own concerns, into themes difficult and remote:

From such-like thoughts I mighty pleasure find,
And silently admire thy strength of Mind;
By whose one single force, to curious eyes
All naked and exposed whole Nature lies.¹

He has not simply the desire that secret mysteries may

¹ *De Rerum Nat.* iii. 28 (Creech).

Pindar also
Pythagoras
1.391 & 11

the Lucretian
the Lucretian
see 266

be made clear : nor that the subtle principles and shapings of the universe should be sought out successfully : still less does he perceive immortal and highest goodness shadowed forth in the outward things which meet our eye : would, indeed, it had been thus ! but Lucretius had no conception of the kind. All he aims at, all he desires and strives for, is to succeed in offering to anxious and troubled souls some sort of relief and comfort by mere contemplation of the vastness and wonderful beauty of the world. He stands, indeed, as a follower of Epicurus, and claims to be entirely loyal to that master's teachings : indeed, he unceasingly claims that no other medicine than the 'peculiar tenets' of the philosopher can touch the diseases of the soul and the troubles and sorrows of human life. Yet we feel throughout the whole poem that the man himself is tortured in his own mind and driven this way and that, as if conscious that he has no sure foothold where he

621 stands : but that for a while he is cheered and of somewhat happier mind when he reviews the marvels of Nature, the courses of the heavenly bodies, the sounds of wood and hills, the flowings of river and ocean. And we may plainly perceive that all these wonders are thus honoured by him not merely as illustrations of his teaching, but also as the solace and the one and only refuge for his own spirit.

But I shall deal with this topic elsewhere : for the present I only wished to say enough to enable any one to form an opinion whether such an observer of earth and heaven as we infer Lucretius to have been does not naturally, and in due succession, come later than Aeschylus.

Next, to take Virgil's case, I apprehend that none will question that his poems are well calculated to give pleasure chiefly to those who after a life spent in public before the eyes of all men have at last withdrawn into quiet, having realized by experience how little even the most advantageous worldly fortune avails to a good and happy

life. This most winning of all poets was, as any may perceive, wont to temper any too bitter complaints about his own life by a not displeasing tone of melancholy : as is often the case with those who have passed their life in the blaze of a court and in public cares. His sorrow and sympathy for 'wretched and weak mortals' (I adopt his own expressions) remind one of a person trying to soothe a child's tears, sympathizing, yet half smiling all the while. He brings into his poems the cattle in their summer pastures, the oxen at the plough, the flocks of sheep, the swarms of bees, even the growth of trees ; each plays its part, and the poet not unwillingly seems to enjoy each scene, as if he was afraid that, should he seek anything beyond these simple joys, it would all (as they say) vanish in smoke and ashes.

I deem it enough to say thus much here as to Virgil's position in connexion with our present discussion. In fact, just as Lucretius points out the refuge offered by river and wood to men wearied by philosophy and thought, so Virgil, in like manner, points those surfeited with the life 622 of politics and business to the same retreat.

Some may perhaps object that my whole theory has been invented for the occasion, and has been adroitly drawn from the particular quality, and confirmed by the single example, of the poetry of the Greeks : I say, of the Greeks, since there is no doubt the Roman poets were pupils of the Greeks. And then they insist that it is unfair to measure the art by a theory we have shaped for ourselves, based on that single example.

It may be worth while, then, to consider how the case holds among nations widely differing both in time and genius. For instance, the Hebrew sacred writers, who were the first to address themselves to poetry and song, by no means failed to appreciate the charm and beauty of the world, yet not one of them ever devoted himself

in particular to that special field. All through the long ages they were writing verse, with consummate art and with glowing phrase, yet never made the main argument of even the shortest psalm to turn on the glory of the country and of Nature. And why? (for I will say my mind, with all reverence for the Divine Presence). They possessed, they of all men most assuredly, something which the whole company of Greeks, both dramatists and Homeric, wholly lacked. For they enjoyed a sure and certain hope both of attaining truth and of living well and happily. No need had they of the solace of retirement and rural bliss, whither to make retreat when wearied and sad. For they had knowledge of Him who is the beginning and the end; and full of devotion to Him, could neither be touched by sorrow nor weariness. A light to guide them was present night and day with them all, at all times and in all places: and if perchance it seemed to hide itself either through their sins or through some misfortune, it was not to river or valley that they fled, nor to rocks or solitudes, as if the mere outward show of things seen by mortal sight had any strength to lift their trouble. But, leaving the streams, they held that the Fount Himself was their true refuge.

‘Did, then, the Hebrew prophets turn Nature, and all her charms to no account?’ On the contrary, they did, and great account too. For all the forms and appearances of things seen around us in the marvellous structure of earth and sky, they read as indications and, as it were, pledges of God’s nearer Presence and of a world truly divine. It was not, therefore, in search of repose or consolation that they turned themselves to these charms and beauties, but from the first they had learnt that it was by their aid that their minds should rise to higher and better things. And in this way they left no part of Nature untouched, and illuminated all that they touched with

a mysterious halo. Never did they sing of beauty without a tender sweetness, nor of sorrow without deep feeling, nor of magnificence without a kind of enthusiasm. Indeed (if I may use secular language in connexion with so sacred a theme)

Th' ethereal vigour is in all the same;
And every soul is fill'd with equal flame.¹

And this is equally true, whether, like Job, they look around them and, recognizing everywhere traces of God's power, make no doubt of His goodness : or, like Isaiah, they take the country and such country operations as the Jews were most familiar with as texts for their teachings or for their rebukes : or finally, like the royal psalmist, follow the common paths of Nature and sing like travellers as they go, finding springs of praise to Almighty God from every object that meets them. Yet while thus taking delight in Nature, they clearly fix the heart and essence of their poetry quite elsewhere : therein resembling the Homeric and Greek poets, though with a higher blessing upon them.

Well, all these things, I think, make for our principle, so far, at all events, that the race most conspicuously wanting in pastoral poetry was just that one on which 624 alone could never fall the heart-sickness which arises from the feeling that all labour is vanity and that the life of poor wretched mortals is not worth living.

And now, leaving the Hebrew writers, let us pass on to those men who were the first to dedicate themselves to our own holy faith and to the true wisdom : we shall find that their case is not different, though not exactly the same. For, to confess the truth, we shall look in vain, at all events for many ages, in that 'city of God', not merely for Virgilian or pastoral poetry, but for any kind

¹ *Aen.* vi. 730 (Dryden).

of poetry at all. And why? It was (if we may give a meagre and inadequate answer to so far-reaching a problem) because they had none of that strong sense of need, none of the restless longing for a nobler life, for which poetry is needed as a solace. For the very foundations of their faith assured them that they were made sharers of a life of bliss and holiness. No need for them, like Homeric writers, to comfort themselves, as far as might be, by poetry and song, because the things they loved were far from them : no need with Virgil to deplore the sad lot of humankind, in which no true happiness could be found, but only such temporary relief as the country and its scenery can give.

But perhaps you may wonder how it was possible that, when there were no regular poets, men could find where-withal to satisfy their hearts, full, as they were, of love and enthusiasm. Well, there were the Hebrew Scriptures, the prayers and sacred songs of the Church, and all the many sacraments that touched life at all its points. These were three veins of truest poetry and were rich and abundant indeed : by their ministry the longings and aspirations of pious souls might well find full expression, even though never marshalled in verse or set in rhythmic measure. In a word, the mysteries of divine Truth supplied the place of poetry among our forefathers, while now the present generation readily forgoes that higher wisdom, satisfied as it would seem with that poetry which is but a shadow of it.

625 'But still, even in those times, there were some, too, among the followers of the Church who in nowise were true to the blessings within their reach : there were degenerate and restless men, liable to the greatest perplexities and anxieties. There was surely nothing,' say some, 'to hinder these from finding relief in Virgilian and rural poetry: yet they never did so.' Such critics go further

and are inclined to doubt if the poetry of Virgil be rightly traced to the source which we have suggested. But, believe me, the objection is vain and unfounded. To begin with, how few there must have been in the early Church against whom any such a charge could be rightly brought; for while the Church was still persecuted and struggling for its existence, its pure and primitive piety survived. In the next place, if any fell away, there was a remedy close at hand: namely, a manly, brave, and lasting penitence maintained throughout life. Once possessed of this regenerative influence, men's minds had little need of elegiac measures, or that sad sweetness which seemed so essential to their forefathers who had not yet been taught better things.

To conclude: it is clear, I think, that nothing could be more apt and opportune than the rise of this class of poets: if, indeed, we are right in assuming, first, that the beginning of poetry among the ancient Greeks may have been wrought by spirits not yet wholly crushed, nor without hope that men might yet live well and happily, if only the heroic spirit could live again in the disciples of Homer, and the Pythagorean discipline in those of Aeschylus: and secondly, that men of a later day, when life-giving and heavenly light had dawned upon the world, had no need of such solace: so in the interval between the two it was fitting and natural that the Virgilian poetry should minister to men's needs and cravings. And thus the records of this school seem, at all events, not inconsistent with the principle 626 we laid down at the outset as to poetry generally.

There occurs to me here a remark which should by no means be passed by: for it touches a fair and natural question. It may be asked, namely, how it can be that men of highest character and noblest life now rate so highly an art which those who were closest to the fountain-spring of good so willingly forwent? In fact, I apprehend

that on this account there may be found even nowadays men of primitive and simple virtue who regard all that is implied by 'writing in verse' with small favour: as being touched with worldly stain and closely associated (so they fancy) with luxury and effeminacy.

Such men should, I think, be warned not to insist that medicine should be rejected by the sick, just because the whole have no need of it. May it not be by the special guidance of Providence that a love of country and Nature, and of the poetry which deals with them, should be strong, just at the time when the aids which led our forefathers willingly to forgo any claim to poetic taste are far removed from the habit of our daily life? Now, as I have just said, their comfort lay in three things, namely, holy scripture, solemn liturgies, and sacramental symbolism: but to-day (I say it without offence) prayers in our churches are few and far between: as for sacramental symbols, such as the first Christians saw around them at all times and in all places, there is not the least thought of such now, except when perchance the ordered ritual of the sanctuary is in question: the Hebrew scriptures are, it is true, read by all, but with little delight or real study, as if they dare not venture beyond the mere letter. Consequently, men gladly betake themselves to rural charms and pastoral poetry and find in them a very real satisfaction: no religious scruple restrains their minds from expatiating freely on every side, nor each of them from selecting for himself what may cheer the dejected spirit, spur the sluggish, or soothe the passionate.

Finally, as it would clearly be impiety to slight the opportune gift of the Supreme Power, so, too, it would be arrogant pride and foolish partiality for the times in which we live, should any one flatter himself that a keen sensibility to this refined poetry stamps him as possessing a noble mind and as being, as they say, cast in a nobler

mould. Then only shall we reap the full value of these splendid bequests of our forefathers when we feel that they win us from trivial tastes or pursuits to seek those true and living remedies for all ill which both Nature herself and her handmaid Poetry only typify and fore-shadow.

Thus I have dealt, as far as my powers permit, with the characteristic note and the original sources of this class of poetry : it remains to consider and pay our tribute to some of the poets themselves. And this done (and it will need several discourses, I apprehend) my task and course will be completed.

How it comes about that also those who lead a country life feel the need of pastoral poetry. Philosophy has the same two divisions as poetry, but in philosophy the order of time is reversed. The use and benefit of Virgilian poetry are by no means superseded since the diviner revelation from Heaven. Concerning Empedocles and Theocritus the forerunners of Lucretius and Virgil. Many qualities would seem to vindicate primary rank for Theocritus : yet there are more which withhold it.

THERE are very many facts in the history of Poetry which suggest the presence of an overruling Providence, and the most striking of all is the comparatively late, yet most well-timed, rise of that kind whose whole interest is centred in the country and the ways of Nature. For to resume shortly what we have said on this subject up to the present ; we laid down, first, that both those who write, and those who admire Poetry, may be clearly divided into two classes, according to a twofold note of difference. For they are seen to be either given to action, or of quiet, contemplative disposition : either they occupy themselves with human deeds and fortunes, or they are drawn towards rural life and the study of Nature. Thus it results that whoever devotes himself to the poetic art tends to one or the other of these two classes, according as he is endowed
 629 with an active or a tranquil temperament. In the next place, we said that the poetry of the Greeks developed in its various parts and members, according to a certain sequence and order : the law and plan being that the poetry of Homer and of action had its rise prior to those who, like Virgil and Lucretius, betook themselves to the benign retreats of the country and to Nature, because weary

either of the anxieties of active life or of the fruitless quest of truth. Nor was this a mere accident, but it was due to a method and a plan, it being a gift conceded by a Benevolent Power to suffering mortals that, at fitting time, writers should appear who would help them to enjoy the hidden solace wherewith all things seen around us are instinct to overflowing.

But I understand that this theory of ours is especially criticized in that portion of it where we suggest that the reason why the ancient Greeks never evolved pastoral poetry may perhaps have been due to the fact that they always possessed the means of enjoying and using the charms of Nature and the country. And my critics urge : ' We have ourselves known poets, and distinguished poets too, who, so far from being led to feel through their daily and ordinary experience of these rural delights, that life could be lived without the poetry of them, dedicated a whole lifetime to composing poems of this very quality. How could it be, then,' they ask, ' that the ancients who were stirred by the same feelings should never have expressed them ? '

But could any one really assert that it is impossible for men, when living in the midst of enjoyment, to feel a sense of need or any sorrow of mind ? The truth is, we are wont to be troubled, not merely by the absence of the things we love, but are also, in great part, afflicted by a certain torturing sense of powerlessness ; so that the mind proves unequal to the full enjoyment of its pleasures ; it seems ' to wander on enchanted ground with dizzy brow and tottering feet '.¹ Which of us is not sometimes affected almost to despair by the splendid vision of earth and sky : when, wherever a man casts his gaze, the lights and shadows

¹ I have borrowed this phrase from *The Christian Year* for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, the thought of which poem is reproduced here.—W. L.

of hill, wood, and shore all appear charmingly intermingled, shifting from moment to moment, yet ever keeping a law
630 of beauty, and nevertheless he feels himself unequal to true admiration or appreciation? Who has not sometimes been filled with emotion at sight of some nook of scenery—pleasant it may be, or perhaps of grimmer aspect—whether by reason of some childish memory or some subtle suggestion of things now lost beyond recall, or finally by the mere grace of form and colour; while nevertheless he has no feeling of satisfaction, for he is conscious that either through some personal shortcoming or through some cause beyond his own will and thought, he is losing much, very much, of the real beauty or majesty of the scene? Indeed, there is nothing for which this human lot of ours is more wont to be deplored than the fact that we cannot ourselves command our feelings or solace them by expression. Do not the more sensitive spirits among us, when filled with special love for any object, constantly lament that no words, not even any feelings, are really adequate to express their love? Are there, for instance, any words delicate enough or exquisitely modulated enough to express fitly and adequately the caressing endearments of mothers playing with their children?

So we must take it as established, that to a large number of men and women poetry is a requisite, even though each has his own special delights ready to his need. But as for the ancient Greeks, what I think is simply this:—inasmuch as they were happily gifted with most delightful scenery and an ideal climate, those of them who were lovers of the country had at hand all that each needed for his solace and joy, in spite of the fact that they were wholly wanting in poetry of the Virgilian order: seeing that lyric and heroic poets particularly, and indeed the tragedians also, had full scope and opportunity for introducing many passages such as both bear witness to and

give delight to minds devoted to Nature and the country. Thus, unless I am mistaken, what I before maintained still holds good : this pastoral muse was by no means inconsistent with the thought of Homeric and Aeschylean times, but neither was it absolutely essential to them. Moreover, in deed and truth, it had not yet developed ; the reason 631 being that men had not yet fully realized how little either the study of philosophy or a life of action availed really p 265-6 to satisfy their cravings : and it only finally emerged to light (such was God's goodness) when human nature began to perceive her need of some such comfort.

I will here merely add a single argument, lest perchance we may seem to some in this view of ours more like dreamers than philosophers : namely, that this entire question turns pre-eminently upon a distinction which is rooted in the facts of nature and of the human mind. It has, in truth, been ordered by the great and perfect Source of all good that His influences should flow towards wretched and suffering humanity through a twofold channel : He, partly, reveals Himself by all the wondrous array of the world and the stable order of all we see around us, and, partly, by His guidance and control of human history. Thus we at once perceive that there may well be two schools, not only of Poetry but of Philosophy also, so far at least as it deals with the things of earth : and the distinction will depend upon the fact that some are more strongly affected by the facts of human life, others by the beauty of earth and sky. And thus, just as the Philosophy of the ancients has on the one hand its Pythagorean, on the other its Ionic school, the former contemplating the 'paths of heaven'¹ and the secret ways of Nature, the latter being wholly drawn to consider the inconstant play of Fortune and the character or civic life of men, so the art of Poetry has its own divisions arising from the same law.

¹ 'Meatus caeli,' *Aen.* vi. 850.

I observe that there was this one important difference in the history of philosophers and poets : in Poetry the Homeric and active kind was the first to develop : it was a somewhat later age that sang of the things of Nature and the culture of ploughed fields. But in the schools of Philosophy the course taken was exactly the opposite : at least if we are not wholly to disregard that oft-quoted
 632 praise of Socrates : who according to Cicero ‘ was the first who brought down philosophy from the heavens, placed it in cities, introduced it into families, and obliged it to examine into life and morals, good and evil ’.¹ You may ask how it was that such similar circumstances should have proceeded in so contrary an order. Well, I am inclined to think that the explanation is simply as follows. The one aim of philosophers is the search after truth : but those who devoted themselves to this, betook themselves more especially to studies wherein truth seemed less on the surface, and needing rather to be drawn up from far deeps. For the enterprising, gifted, and even self-reliant race of Greeks, when first it occupied itself with literature, was by way of fancying that on the subject of human character everything was bound to be simple and straightforward. And this is, for the most part, the attitude of children : indeed, the saying that the ancient Greeks remained children all their lives has completely passed into a proverb : καὶ γέρων Ἑλλήν οὐδεὶς (‘ no Greek was ever an old man ’). But, on the other hand, as to physical principles :—‘ numbers and motions, the beginning and end of things . . . the magnitude of the stars, their distances, courses,’ and, in a word, ‘ all that relates to the heavens ’²—all these were virgin themes and still shrouded in doubt : here they recognized a field for their subtle intellect, here there were secrets to be revealed, so that such as aspired to be ranked as philosophers betook themselves to these

¹ *Tusc. Disp.* v. 4. 10.² *Ibid.*

questions ; leaving the poets to deal with all the region relating to human affairs, to fate, fortune, and character. But as time went on, and they realized by long experience what impenetrable obscurity lay over men's fortunes, and therefore over men's characters as well : how hard and arduous was the precept 'know thyself' : then it was they turned their minds to moral philosophy and made Poetry hark back to subjects of country life and Nature study. For as the issue of their own lot grew daily more obscure and involved, with all the more sympathy and longing did they turn their eyes to all the various glory of earth and sky, like men who, when accurate knowledge has been denied them, would fain seek some sign and augury in any thing whatsoever they might encounter.

But I need not pursue this further. I only wished to 633 safeguard myself against the thought that might occur to some of you that in lauding the value of Virgilian poetry as being bestowed by way of noble gift upon weak and wearied humanity, I have exalted it unduly. But again, on the other hand, some one, perhaps, and not without a certain plausibility, may urge : ' So be it then : granted that this pastoral Muse is notably adapted to solace men's minds : but, even so, who can suppose it divinely imparted ? more especially seeing that the one true and eternal medicine for the soul was vouchsafed at the very same time : when that was once given, such slight and temporary relief was bound to cease. What ', they ask, ' is the use of Virgil's pastorals, when we have inspired utterances issuing from the Holy of Holies itself ? To what end, " the fields and the cool streams in the valley," the pathetic sweetness of river and wood, when the way lies open to all, which conducts to heavenly repose, to the abodes of those who are justly called blessed ? Why, have you not yourself already ruled that the primitive pure Church willingly forwent all the art and charm of Poetry,

just on this very account, that human life was so much altered for the higher and better, that solace of this kind came to seem trivial and absurd?'

But, in sober fact, who has ever supposed that the one and only cause of all the divine gifts to man is found in their apparent use to ourselves? Does not every year testify how lavish, indeed how prodigal, is Nature: whether we consider the wealth of flowers scattered in every nook and corner, of infinite and most delightful variety, whose colour and feature, nevertheless, no single human being will ever enjoy: or the luxuriance of wild berries and all kinds of fruit, of which the richer the prospect in spring and summer, the wider the scattering by the winds of autumn? To whom of us all—those at least who have left our youth behind us—has not the truth of Virgil's lines come home only too often?—

This youth (the blissful vision of a day)

Shall just be shown on earth, then snatched away.¹

So let none deem it beyond credence that Virgilian poetry, even though only just come to birth, might possibly be superseded and set aside on the discovery of truths with more power to heal, more charm to recreate mankind. Besides, who knows but that it may have been bestowed upon us by divine counsel as a reproach to our sluggish and ungrateful minds, to the end that we might not ever remain unworthy of divine providences? For, assuredly, that vein of poetry, that sought a life of quiet and tender feelings, that loved to hide in sheltered nooks, might stand as eternal proof how little mortal minds are self-sufficing, whether they betake themselves to worldly business or philosophic contemplation. It might reprove the folly of those who, when the certainties of heaven are offered to them, prefer to cling to the uncertainties of

¹ *Aen.* vi. 870 (Dryden).

earth. It might, finally, afford comfort to weaker spirits, and prepare those wearied with vice and error for a sterner discipline.

Such are the considerations which move me to believe it not extravagant for any one to maintain that it was not without the guidance of providence that there appeared, just at their particular times, first Lucretius and later Virgil, who may be said to be the leaders in this new family of poets. Moreover, there was a mass of material ready to hand for each in his work ; they by no means entered on an utterly virgin field : already the ground had been broken, and the way, so to speak, levelled, for Lucretius, by Empedocles ; for Virgil, by Theocritus.

As to Empedocles, indeed, what has come down to us is too meagre for me to venture on any certain conclusions concerning the character of his writings. Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, denies him anything in common with Homer, except metre.¹ Yet, in another work, if we may trust Laertius, 635 Aristotle styled him Homeric, and said that he was gifted with every poetic art and faculty. But if we take, as a just example of his power, the fragments of his poems which are quoted from time to time in the works of Plutarch, Aristotle, and others, I should certainly say that, in so far as metre is concerned, he perhaps sometimes approaches the majesty of Homer : but as regards splendour of word and thought, his verse is comparatively dull and heavy. He deserves Lucretius' memorable and splendid encomium, rather by reason of his penetrating insight into natural things than for any peculiarly poetic distinction. But hear what Lucretius says :

Thus sang Empedocles . . .
In fruitful Sicily, whose crooked sides
The Ionian washes with impetuous Tides,
And a small Frith from Italy divides :

¹ *Poet.* 3.

Here Scylla raves and fierce Charybdis roars,
 Beating with boisterous waves the trembling shores ;
 Here prest Enceladus with mighty loads,
 Vomits revenge in flames against the Gods ;
 Thro' Etna's jaws he impudently threatens,
 And thundering Heaven with equal thunder beats :
 This Isle, tho' with such wondrous sights as these
 Doth call forth Trav'lers, and the Curious please,
 Is rich with men and fruit, hath rarely shown
 A thing more glorious than this single One.
 His verse compos'd of Nature's works declare
 His Wit was strong, and his Invention rare :
 His Judgment deep and sound, whence some began,
 And justly too, to think him more than Man.¹

Is it not clear that he is praised as one who pours forth wise sayings, not as a poet who 'pens lucid verses o'er-laying all with the Muses' charm',² an honour with which Lucretius himself does not hesitate to dignify his own name? Thus he was, probably, led to these regions of Poetry by the example and guidance of Empedocles, and, moreover, borrowed, as occasion demanded, not a little from his apparatus and general equipment, while nevertheless he charged it all—the theme being somewhat over-severe for poetry—with a certain peculiar force of his own.

But I pass from Empedocles : for indeed, like the maimed statue of some ancient hero, he has hardly left us a single complete limb even by which to recognize him. I proceed to consider Theocritus, a subject both more attractive and
 636 offering a richer material for discussion. As all know, Virgil, when he first began to poetize, resorted to his works as a fount of inspiration ;

I first transferr'd to Rome Sicilian strains ;
 Nor blush'd the Doric Muse to dwell on Mantuan
 plains.³

¹ *Lucr.* i. 717 (Creech, 3rd ed., 1683).

² *Lucr.* i. 933.

³ *Eclog.* vi. 1 (Dryden).

Thus openly and frankly he assigns to Theocritus the honours of originality and declares himself only an imitator. And of like import are his oft-repeated references to Sicily and the Sicilian Muse. In fact, we see for ourselves that the Eclogues are to a great extent derived from the Idylls : not simply isolated embellishments of expression, and brilliant passages scattered here and there, but even the whole scheme and ordering of the poems.

Nor was Virgil the only imitator of Theocritus, but as epic poets imitated Homer, so all who wrote what are called pastorals, seem, without exception, to have placed him before them as their model. Hence we should rightly infer that he was really inspired to strike out the poetic form best adapted for setting forth the way of life, the tastes and pursuits, the religion, even the light jests and badinage, of simple countryfolk.

All this being so, it may fairly be ground of surprise that I only assign a secondary poetic rank to so great a man : and hold that, not in his own right, but simply because of his literary connexion with Virgil, has he any claim to be enrolled among primary poets. And I quite admit that there are not lacking some considerations which largely make for his higher claims. For those very facts which I have already emphasized argue a mind fixed and keen upon its own special delights : his being the first, namely, to conceive for himself a kind of artistic form previously unattempted and suitable for expressing the most beautiful poetry : and also the fact that he has proved not only the pioneer, but the only master to all who followed. Moreover, I am conscious that a third fact still remains to be mentioned, which may be urged to the same end : and with this, indeed, I am still more impressed. For the truth is, that in Theocritus we not unfrequently 637 meet a trait which is generally an index of a genuine and by no means artificial enthusiasm, namely, that designedly,

and at points where his subject does not require it, he introduces rustic and simple scenes. For example, his shepherd in the first Idyll describes a beechen cup; and so, too, one of Virgil's swains does the same: but note the difference between them. The latter introduces certain similes, beautiful indeed in themselves, and the special delight of Greek artists, but, nevertheless, rather beyond the appreciation of simple shepherds:

Two figures on the sides emboss'd appear—
Conon, and what's his name who made the sphere
And shew'd the seasons of the sliding year?¹

And of another cup we read:

Where Orpheus on his lyre laments his love,
With beasts encompass'd, and a dancing grove.²

On the other hand, the scenes painted on the bowl of Theocritus suggest one and all the simple life of country-folk:

Amidst the scene, a fisher, grey with years,
On the rough summit of a rock appears:
And labouring with one effort as he stands,
To throw his large net, drags it with both hands!
So muscular his limbs attract the sight—
You'd swear the fisher stretch'd with all his might.
Round his hoar neck, each swelling vein displays
A vigour worthy youth's robuster days!
Next, red ripe grapes in bending clusters glow:
A boy, to watch the vineyard, sits below!
Two foxes round him skulk: this slily gapes,
To catch a luscious morsel of the grapes;
But that, in ambush, aiming at the scrip,
Thinks 'tis too sweet a moment to let slip—
And cries: 'It suits my tooth—the little dunce—
I'll send him dinnerless away, for once!'
He, idly-busy, with his rush-bound reeds
Weaves locust-traps; nor scrip nor vineyard heeds.³

¹ *Eclog.* iii. 40 (Dryden).

² *Ibid.* 46.

³ *Theoc. Idyll.* i. 39 (Polwhele).

This is just the way in which those who are exiled far from their loved country scenes solace their minds with some painting of them.

And then there is that most enticingly beautiful scene, where the same poet describes Galatea sporting on the sea-shore, and Polyphemus with his dog. Does not its quality suggest that the writer had in deed and truth himself actually witnessed something of the kind ?

With apples Galatea pelts thy flocks,
And thee, rude Polypheme, gay tittering, mocks !
Sweet as thou pip'st, she calls thee goatherd-churl ;
And yet thou dost not see the skittish girl,
Still piping on, more senseless than a log—
There—there—the little wanton pelts thy dog !
He, on the lucid wave, his form surveys ;
And, on the beach, his dancing shadow bays !
Call—call him, lest he rush upon the fair ;
Lest her emerging limbs the rover tear !
Yet, lo ! the frolic maiden sports at ease,
Light as the down that floats upon the breeze,
When summer dries the thistle's silver hair,
Its softness melting into azure air !—
Her lover, led by strange caprice, she flies ;
And views her scorner with complacent eyes !¹

No doubt—I quite admit it—all sketches of this kind are but light and trivial : yet they are of quality such as any one who is a hearty and sincere lover of the country and familiar haunts, having once witnessed, instinctively fixes in his memory.

In this connexion we may fairly quote the beautiful little story of the goatherd, delivered miraculously from the cruel designs of his master :

Next shall he sing—how tyranny oppress'd
The goatherd, prison'd in his ample chest !
And how the bees from flowery meadows bore
Their balms, and fed him with the luscious store !

¹ Theoc. *Idyll.* vi. 6 (Polwhele).

For on his lips the favour of the Muse
 Distil'd the nectar of her sweetest dew !
 To thee, Comates, though confin'd so fast,
 Sure, with quick pace, the vernal season past !
 Happy, amid thy prison, all day long,
 While honey dropp'd delicious on thy tongue !
 O hadst thou liv'd with us, a brother-swain,
 How oft my charmed ears had caught thy strain !
 Thy goats upon the mountains had I fed,
 Or o'er the tufted vales with pleasure led !
 Then had thy voice its sweetest power display'd,
 Beneath th' embowering oak or pine-tree shade !¹

Here, assuredly, even the very progress and scheme of the metre have in them something melodious and flowing which exactly becomes one freely and rapturously revelling
 639 in his own familiar fields. And I doubt if any poet has ever more happily given us a picture of a mind accustomed to delight in these summer joys of rural folk.

Is there anything, then, so decisively opposed to these merits that the real disposition of Theocritus stands finally doubtful, and it is not clear whether he sang from genuine love of country life, or moved by love of fame and gain ? As a matter of fact, there is more than one consideration of the kind, and such as seem, in a case like this, to admit well-grounded conjecture. Theocritus, according to the scholiasts, when of mature age and reputation, migrated, either from the Isle of Cos or from Sicily, to the court of King Ptolemy in Egypt. Thus we have a twofold series of his poems : for some were written in his native home whilst he had actually before his eyes the woods and country he celebrated : some, at Alexandria, when he had entirely changed his mode of life as well as his place of abode. His passion for woodland and country scenes, therefore, were it genuine and heartfelt, should colour the later poems with its peculiar quality as much as the earlier. What matter if, perchance,

¹ Theoc. *Idyll.* vii. 78 (Polwhele).

a subject was offered to him alien to the peaceful pastoral life ? if he was called upon to hymn the praises of Ptolemy, or to sing the victory of Pollux in a boxing-match, or Hercules' mastery, when an infant, over twin vipers, or when a grown man, over the terrible Nemean lion ? Colour and light and similes might nevertheless have well been drawn from his memories of Sicily and the lives of simple husbandmen. But I am afraid that in the city and court Idylls of Theocritus, we shall look in vain for any such rustic recollections. He might, at all events, have intermingled something of this kind, opportunely, in the poem called 'The Festival of Adonis'.¹ Since two Syracusan women are speakers in it, the Doric dialect is used, and the gardens of Adonis are described. But I find there nothing plainly suggestive of Sicily, except perhaps these exquisitely sweet lines :

And green shades, arch'd with anise, rise,
Where many a little Cupid flies,
Like the young nightingales that love,
New-fledg'd, to flutter through the grove—
Now perching, now with short essay
Borne on weak wing from spray to spray !²

640

And again, the dirge called *Ἡρακλίσκος*, although exhibiting a lyric and almost Pindaric splendour (indeed, the substance of it seems adapted from Pindar's first Nemean Ode); yet I doubt if, in any single particular, it preserves the simple Doric note specially characteristic of Theocritus. In short, my deliberate opinion is, that in this writer two tendencies were strongly manifested at different periods : the first, which was truer and more vital, lured him to country scenes and the joys of simple countryfolk ; in the other, which was of later date, everything was modelled on Homer, and that too, not so much to please

¹ *Idyll.* xv.² Theoc. *Idyll.* xv. 118.

his own taste as King Ptolemy's, or perhaps that of the time and fashion.

For I leave on one side a suspicion which (I will confess) sometimes occurs to me : that perhaps not all the poems which now pass themselves off under the name of Theocritus are rightly assigned to him. But while this is, in many cases, not without plausible ground, yet I steadfastly maintain that the *Syracusan Women* already quoted could not possibly have been written by any one but Theocritus alone. It still holds good, therefore, that his later poems do not well agree with those written earlier : a fact which, in my view, is most significant of a mind not thoroughly devoted to any one leading enthusiasm.

However, I advance this with a certain hesitancy : but there is another fact, which seems to me clear beyond doubt, namely, that Theocritus touches these loveliest natural scenes with a coarseness and want of refined feeling, after the fashion of such as measure all things by the mere standard of outward sense. And I am afraid that the whole poetry of the ancients, except perhaps the work of Aeschylus alone, labours under this defect : such coarseness seems indeed a characteristic mark, thoroughly ingrained in their misguided religions. And not the ancients alone, but those also in our own age who have trod most closely in their footsteps, and are therefore esteemed as most graceful poets, are very far from appreciating the genuine charms of Nature. Indeed, I can see that all such are tainted with this most grievous blemish, namely, that they tend to judge whatever amid the grand scene of earth and sky touches men's eyes and ears with special delight, by a sensuous and purely material standard. In this spirit Aristophanes, in this spirit Catullus, and (what is most regrettable) Horace—the brightest and gayest of them all—retreats to river and wood not so much seeking relief for a jaded mind as to seek a fresh stimulus for his

pleasures. They may be justly, then, entitled to high praise as regards the kindly spirit of their thoughts and the beauty of their verse : but I can by no means allow them to be ranked among true lovers of the country, since they took delight in the things of Nature and of the country life not for the sake of the country and Nature, but merely by reason of their self-indulgent and luxurious tastes, which, as they deemed, could be more fully indulged in the country.

Well, I am compelled, however unwillingly, to confess that Theocritus must be ranked in the number of these Epicureans ; partly, because his shepherds are wont to blurt out everything in their talk, without any reserve or any reverence : a blemish, it is true, which offends us very much even in Virgil and the other ancient poets, but, nevertheless, it is far less common with them than in the Idylls of Theocritus. They give the impression of using such language as a matter of literary convention, because they have to imitate their predecessors : Theocritus rather seems to give play to his own genius and taste.

Another thing, I admit, weighs greatly with me in this connexion (which, however, ' I feel, but want the power to paint,' as the phrase goes ¹) ; I mean a certain tinge or quality, namely, which pervades this poet's works throughout : it is not inelegant certainly, nor without its own special charm : and yet I cannot but feel it wholly irrecon- 642
cilable with an honest and sincere passion for Nature. And as in all such cases, examples best express one's meaning, let us test in the case of the Idyll known as *Thalusia*, what was the real spirit in which Theocritus contemplates the pageant of country life and Nature at large. No other poem more plainly declares the cravings of his natural disposition : nowhere does he give freer rein to his characteristic power of dialogue : in no other poem

¹ Juvenal, vii. 56.

does the verse flow more easily. And this is how he concludes the whole thing—after a sort of musical contest, including some rather wanton stories, has been disposed of :

I sung, and (as presenting me his crook
He smil'd) the hospitable token took !
Then, parting, to the left, for Pyxa's towers
He turn'd : while we to Phrasidamus' bowers
Slop'd o'er the right-hand path our speedy way,
And hail'd the pleasures of the festal day.
There, in kind courtesy, our host had spread
Of vine and lentisk the refreshing bed !
Their breezy coolness elms and poplars gave,
And rills their murmur, from the Naiad's cave !
Cicadas now retiring from the sun,
Amid the shady shrubs their song begun.
From the thick copse we heard, far off and lone,
The mellow'd shrillness of the woodlark's tone !
Warbled the linnet and the finch more near,
And the soft-sighing turtle sooth'd the ear !
The yellow bees humm'd sweetly in the shade,
And round the fountain's flowery margin play'd :
All summer's redolence effus'd delight !
All autumn, in luxuriant fruitage bright—
The pears, the thick-strown apples' vermeil glow,
And bending plums, that kiss'd the turf below !
Our wines four years had mellow'd in the cask—

And then how gracefully he plays amid the echoes of old story and the cadences of heroic song—

And could Alcides boast so rich a flask,
(Say, Nymphs of Castaly) when Chiron gave
The generous juice, in Pholus' stony cave ?
Or did such nectar, at Anapus' stream,
Rouse to the dance the Cyclops Polypheme,
(Who hurls the mountain-rocks across the brine)
As, Nymphs, ye mix'd at Ceres' glowing shrine ?
Oh ! may I fix the purging fan, again
(Delightful task !), amid her heaps of grain ;
And, in each hand, the laughing Goddess hold
The poppy's vivid red—the ears of gold.¹

¹ Theocr. *Idyll.* vii. 131.

Truly, even as Virgil's Bitias, that 'thirsty soul',

With pleasure swill'd the gold, nor ceased to draw,
Till he the bottom of the brimmer saw;¹

so, in composing these lines, the poet drank deep, as it were, of rural delights and, if I may so express it, 'swilled himself with the flowing' country: all the while, however, as any one may see, his sympathies are rather with any hedger or ditcher, than with such as, wearied with study or business, betake themselves to the country for the sake of soothing shade and shelter. Consequently, whoever, with me, holds that from this Idyll alone we may find a specimen and type of Theocritus' work, will not remain doubtful of what I have laboured to impress in this discourse, namely, that the Sicilian Muse was not truly the forerunner of the Virgilian poetry, but rather supplied Virgil with his material. And accordingly the germs of that order of poetry which is concerned with the country and Nature ought to be traced not to those who were the earliest to write pastoral poems, but rather to such as were the first to feel the real need of such relief: those whose passion for the groves, the open country, and the pastured meadows was grounded, not on opulent display but on the charms of peace and quiet.

Finally, let it not seem strange if a writer who so deeply moves readers even of our own time, and who furnished to Virgil, great poet as he was, to a large extent, the original ideas and groundwork of his poems, should be refused by us the honour of primary rank: for it should be remembered in these questions of poetic criticism, that it is all but impossible for readers to avoid unintentionally and unconsciously confusing, in many instances, their own feelings with those of the writer. Just as in feeling a pulse it is not always easy for a doctor to detect whether the

¹ *Aen.* i. 739 (Dryden).

644 beating comes from himself or from his patient, so the case is exactly the same in the close union and mingling of the minds of author and reader. Whosoever, by some charm of recollection or by some natural instinct, are carried spontaneously away to country and wood, must necessarily feel their minds moved by the mere mention of the loved objects, almost as if they saw them immediately before their eyes. Such readers forthwith perhaps attribute to the genius of the writer their own enthusiasm, which they would nevertheless have felt to just the same degree, in whatever form or manner the ideas had been presented before them. Thus it may happen that the majority of readers follow with delight even a quite mediocre poet, so long as he narrates rustic affairs in a homely country style, and natural things with native simplicity ; and they take it amiss if their favourite is excluded from the ranks of those who are really born poets : though he could only be enrolled in the divine choir by a principle of criticism, which would equally admit any one of the countryfolk themselves, who himself, in person, enacted the things so described and narrated. For instance : in Theocritus there is a shepherd who upbraids his dog for sleeping at the wrong moment, obviously just after the everyday manner of country-living folk :

Hah, Brightfoot ! how my dog ! so fast asleep ?
Here trusting to a boy such numerous sheep ?¹

Nothing could be more simple : the impression clearly is exactly as if one heard the words spoken, either in the stable or the fields. So far, therefore, as the lines have a quality imparting emotion after the manner of poetry—which they have, undoubtedly, on several grounds—it remains uncertain whether this poetic effect is due to the writer or the reader. This principle has many applications : so let no one deny that a poet may kindle in another a fire

¹ Theoc. *Idyll.* viii. 6. 5 (Polwhele).

which he lacks himself ; nor marvel that Virgil, the imitator, is actually nearer the fount and spring of his style of poetry than Theocritus who was its originator and pioneer.

No need, gentlemen, that I should impress on you that are of a younger generation, how gravely important it is, even in this poetic delight and enjoyment, that each 645 of us should keep and guard his mind in all modesty, simplicity, and purity. If we do this, not even perusal of the most weak and tasteless writer will be without its advantage : while, on the other hand, from mere voluptuaries and those of debased imagination, Nature herself and Poetry her handmaid and interpreter, will withhold their own rich fragrance.

Lucretius and Virgil are taken as specimens of the two classes of the poetry which deals with Nature. Lucretius' main delight was in the mystery and infinity of Nature, the vast ranges and the splendour of the heavens, the restless play of wind and light. To this was due his devotion to the philosophy of Epicurus.

I AM well aware that the essence of the charm of poetry is too subtle, too elusive, to be brought easily under any fixed rule or to be defined in set language. To whatever part of it we turn, we fall back again and again upon the well-known saying, 'I feel, but want the power to paint.'¹ Moreover, I apprehend that nowhere do those who affect to lay down principles and rules concerning these subjects find greater difficulties than when they approach Pastoral Poetry, and the case of poets smitten with the attractions of forest and river. For the cares and occupations of men, whether warlike or civil, public or private, have each severally a definite character : each has something peculiar and distinctive. You can say at once, this man is attracted by naval, that by martial glory : this delights in athletics, another in court life ; a third, it may be, in scholarly retirement. On the other hand, those who feast their eyes with the beauty of Nature, all seem to exhibit precisely the same principle and disposition ; or, if there is any difference, it is such that there is no hard and fast line by which you can clearly mark off one from another.

But in deed and truth, just as it is said that there is not a single individual who does not, even by his very gait, gesture, and minute distinctions of that kind, clearly differ from all other human beings, so it must needs be that those who, moved by love of country life and nature's

¹ Juvenal, vii. 56.

charms, betake themselves to Poetry, possess each his own quality, of which we may at least catch the broad outlines: this is at least so far true, that when once some one or two of the primary poets have been described and classed, we shall gain some clear types to which the form and feature of the lesser poets may be referred. Hence I have thought it appropriate to our discussion if I invite you in to-day's lecture to see whether we can discover the essential point of difference between the principles and methods of Virgil and Lucretius. For we have already pronounced that to these two poets may be traced the first beginnings of that region of Poetry which has to do conspicuously and chiefly with all that relates to the appearances of sky and earth and the secret things of Nature.

So I will at once go to that which will always lie at the root of the matter in such a discussion. There are two chief ways in which the panorama of Nature is wont to affect men's thoughts and feelings most keenly. It does so, either in virtue of the deeply hidden and remote causes of things; and the mind that has once essayed to divine these causes cannot satiate itself by long and deep contemplation:—for 'it is by nature delightful to learn and to admire'¹—or, because of the charm of its quiet and tranquillity, whereby those who have either always hated public life, or those who have been wearied with it and renounced it, at last feel that they gain recreation and refreshment. The former delight in all that is more obscure and difficult, the latter in all that is sheltered from care: and thus we see that the men who, again and again, withdraw to the secrets of country life, have for the most part devoted themselves either to inquiry into Nature's inner truths, or to the mere enjoyment of her charms.

Now it is, unless I mistake, just this very difference that most especially distinguishes Lucretius from Virgil. The

¹ Arist. *Rhet.* i. 11.

former delightedly contemplates Nature as if it were a shrine, full of sacred mysteries, the quality of all of which is such that they reveal themselves to none but him whose vision is purified by philosophy, and even minds best prepared for the study lose themselves in the sense of infinity. The latter, enthralled by her mere loveliness, like a child, looks for nothing more, let him only be carried among the open fields, and free to expatiate midst the wide sky and land, without care and without disturbance. [Lucretius, one sees, wheresoever he casts around his gaze, is hunting for arguments and reasons whereby he may defend the speculative theories of his master, to which he has devoted himself]: while Virgil, on the contrary, suffers himself to be borne away to the country, as to a haven of rest: he seems to be persistently bidding, not only the wealthy and those burdened with public cares, but even the whole tribe of philosophers and reasoners, to go and enjoy themselves elsewhere.

But why spend time on this? Virgil himself, I think, has not uncertainly indicated some distinction of this kind in these far-famed and beautiful lines:

Happy the man, who, studying Nature's laws,
Through known effects can trace the secret cause—
His mind possessing in a quiet state,
Fearless of Fortune and resigned to Fate!
And happy too is he, who decks the bow'rs
Of Silvans, and adores the rural pow'rs—¹

Does not he seem, clearly, to describe for us this twofold significance of the poetry which is concerned with Nature? It is as if he said, 'I could wish indeed, did not my feebler power forbid, to rank myself with the followers of Lucretius. But I am conscious that Nature has assigned me a quite different field: it is my task to sing of all that is charming, all that is beautiful, all that is tender in the

¹ Virg. *Georg.* ii. 490 (Dryden).

scenes that meet our eye on all hands : I shall comfort 649 myself with these, to these I shall fly for refuge, resigning that other deep, solemn, austere vein of poetry.' And here I would have you note no doubtful traces of a certain Virgilian 'irony', as it is called. Doubtless, the poet denies his ability to follow the theme of Lucretius, yet he denies it with such dignity and impressiveness of phrase, as to show us plainly that, should he so will, he could attain a very high level in that sphere too :

Ye sacred Muses ! with whose beauty fir'd,
My soul is ravish'd and my brain inspir'd—
Whose priest I am, whose holy fillets wear—
Would you your poet's first petition hear ;
Give me the ways of wandering stars to know,
The depths of heaven above and earth below :
Teach me the various labours of the moon,
And whence proceed th' eclipses of the sun ;
Why flowing tides prevail upon the main,
And in what dark recess they shrink again ;
What shakes the solid earth ; what cause delays
The summer nights, and shortens winter days.¹

In this passage he seems to single out for himself just those parts of the philosophy of Nature which Lucretius had either omitted altogether or dealt with less carefully. But when he has essayed a short Lucretian flight, he betakes himself readily and joyfully to his own true strain :

145 But, if my heavy blood restrain the flight
Of my free soul, aspiring to the height
Of nature, and unclouded fields of light—
My next desire is, void of care and strife,
To lead a soft, secure, inglorious life.²

far from the
maddening crowd
equal strife

I have here cited these familiar and widely-known lines, since I conceived it would much advance our argument, if I could put Virgil himself into the witness-box, certainly an adequate witness both about Lucretius and himself.

¹ Virg. *Georg.* ii. 475 (Dryden). ² Virg. *Georg.* ii. 483 (Dryden).

But now to come to the heart of the Lucretian poem,— I apprehend that I have undertaken a twofold task in dealing with this subject. First, I shall maintain that Lucretius should be ranked among those possessed by a pre-eminent passion for Nature and the country : next, that he more especially contemplated Nature on that side of her which is characterized by secrecy and mystery, where its laws are not clear, its limits not defined, its divisions not clearly marked. For to both parts of my contention difficulties and objections may be raised.

650 To begin with, it must at once strike every one, that the whole of this speculation concerning the nature of things is abstruse and remote from all poetic feeling, seeing that it includes nothing of human action, and in the greater part of it the object is to get away from the impressions of eye and ear and from the entire outward show of things, to the contemplation of some arid regions of philosophy. In short : we may, unquestionably, under this argument, bring in all that men are wont to advance whenever mathematics or physics are discussed, and the irreconcilable quarrel which is said to exist between all this kind of learning and the interests and principles of poets.

Nor can we allow ourselves to fall back on the suggestion that the peculiar disposition of the poet ill accorded with the subject of his poem : and consequently, that he seized on all opportunities of interlude and digression, whereby he might often and again escape, and betake himself to the themes he really loved : just as, in his *Aeneid*, Virgil contrived, in the very midst of war and heroic turmoil to refresh his spirit with some hint that recalled the memory of country life. Such a resource, I say, the case of Lucretius does not permit us : since if ever a poet, having once conceived a scheme, held to it, enforced it, emphasized it, with heart and soul, that poet was Lucretius : nor did he ever allow anything whatever to withdraw him for long

from his chosen theories and philosophy. Nay, never once, as far as I know (and in this I should say he marvellously differs from Virgil), does he appear, even for the sake of relief, to exhibit any trace of a gay and trifling tone. With might and main, as the saying is, he utterly declines and avoids irony. Nowhere do we find him playing with his atoms and phantoms as we see Virgil playing with his bees and his flocks. In fact, herein he everywhere shows himself the strictest of teachers, as if he meant to imply that he would not tolerate any one who would play while dealing with such a theme. This circumstance perhaps 651 affords scope for wider treatment: here I simply point out this—it affords strong evidence that Lucretius was a man wholly and absolutely wrapt up in his philosophy such as it was: and that no weariness of his subject led him to seek solace in forest and river.

What if I maintain further that these two qualities of his poetry were associated by inevitable necessity, and that those Epicurean dreams pleased Lucretius for no other reason than that which drew his gaze to this universal frame and feature of earth and sky? Throughout his poem, if we look a little carefully, we shall find that he is drawn to Nature like one eager to outline, *not* her delicate grace, the soft light of her colour, her charming retreats, but rather her vastnesses, profundities, mysteries, and infinity; those influences of hers which seem to expand out infinitely on every side and to escape our ken: those which by hidden paths lose themselves in dark obscurity, and then from time to time unexpectedly flash out and give us vistas of some far-off scene. In short, he adored the Infinite with all his heart and soul.

Let us see, then, if those splendid lines concerning the whole sum of the universal sum' (as he calls it) do not betray something of this quality. We may here quote just a few out of many which might be cited:

But lastly, Things to things still Bounds appear :
 So Air to lofty Hills, and Hills to Air,
 So Earth the Seas, and Seas the Earth control,
 But there is nothing that can bound the Whole.
 Wherefore 'tis such, that did swift Lightning flie
 Thro' the vast space to all eternity,
 No utmost part, no end would e're be found,
 So vastly wide it is, and without bound.¹

Accordingly, once having conceived this notion of a region
 652 bounded by no limits, he seems to feel an extraordinary
 delight in the thought, as if he felt himself started on a free
 and untrammelled career, and borne through the limitless
 void : this is just like the pleasure, if pleasure it can be
 called, which children feel when, stationed on some look-
 out, they feel, as they often do, an impulse prompting
 them to cast themselves down and leap into mid, empty
 air. Assuredly the following lines, in which Lucretius,
 a little earlier in the same book had argued about the
 infinity of space, bear witness to such a fancy :

But grant it finite—
 Suppose a man on the extreamest part,
 Suppose him stand, and strive to throw a Dart :
 The Dart would forward fly, or hindred stay :
 Choose which you will, the Reason's good each way
 And firm : For if some further space admit,
 Or some resistance stops its hasty flight,
 That's not the end : so place the utmost part
 Where e're you will, I'll follow with the Dart,
 And by this single Argument deface.
 (For still the Void will give a further place)
 Those feign'd extreams and Bounds you fix to space.²

I can easily imagine that the writer of these lines, like
 a boy released to play, would revel with delight as his
 mind roamed through the extremest spaces of the universe ;
 the mere love of his freedom and of his power to range
 where he would carrying him along.

¹ Lucr. i. 997 (Creech).

² Lucr. i. 967 (Creech).

Observe, moreover, how eagerly his eyes are ever fixed on the sky, whether obscured by cloud or clear and serene : he cannot satiate his sense of delight as often as he gazes up at ' this refulgent heaven above ', to use the phrase of his master Ennius. He even declares in one passage that he is astonished how men can ever cease to look out on 653 the heavens with awe and delight.

But now attend, I'll teach thee something new :
 'Tis strange, but yet 'tis reason, and 'tis true.
 E'en what we now with greatest ease receive,
 Seem'd strange at first, and we could scarce believe ;
 And what we wonder at, as years increase,
 Will seem more plain, and all our wonder cease.
 For look, the Heaven, the Stars, the Sun, and Moon,
 If on a sudden unto Mortals shown,
 Discover'd now, and never seen before,
 What could have rais'd the people's wonder more ?
 What could be more admired at here below ?
 E'en you had been surprised at such a show,
 But now all cloy'd with these, scarce cast an eye,
 Or think it worth the pains to view the sky.¹

Assuredly these lines, Epicurean though they may be, far surpass the Stoic motto *Nil admirari* ; a precept, I may briefly remark, which even Horace would seem to reprove ; for he laments in a well-known passage, how

The sun, the stars, the seasons of the year
 That come and go, some gaze at without fear—²

while, nevertheless, these very men are dumb with astonishment at the wealth of land and ocean, and treasures of purple, precious stones and gold. And if the sleek and cultured Horace, who frankly tells us that he belongs to ' Epicurus' sty ', could not see without resentment the simple joy in this wide universal Nature diminished and extinguished, what, I ask, can we suppose that Lucretius would make of such people, Lucretius who was so keen

¹ *Lucr. ii. 1027* (Creech).

² *Hor. Ep. i. 6. 3.*

in temperament, and carried away by such impassioned feelings? Truly, to say what I think, who knows whether this may not be the real reason why all the more refined spirits in ancient days were attracted rather to the school of Epicurus than to that of Zeno? Certainly a school which
 654 devotes such pains to the description of the outward order around, even if it assigned undue importance to the physical senses, must yet be allowed to approach more nearly to the special tastes and disposition of poets, than the one which was occupied almost entirely with a certain barren subtlety of phraseology. In a word, natural science is much more nearly allied to the Muses than Dialectics are.

Let us, however, return to Lucretius, and by way of illustration of his genius, consider one or two other passages wherein he hymns the praises of the pure, infinite ether: showing his extraordinary delight, partly in its clear brilliance, partly in its vast expanse without let or limit. Listen to him recounting in the Fifth Book its beginnings—a veritable hymn of dawn:

And thus the parts of Heaven did first retire,
 And bore up with them numerous Seeds of Fire.
 As when the Sun begins his early race,
 And views the joyful earth with blushing face,
 And quaffs the Pearly Dew spread o're the Grass,
 From earth he draws some Mists with busie beams,
 From wandring waters some, and running streams:
 These thin, these subtle Mists when raised on high,
 And joyn'd above, spread clouds o're all the sky:
 Just so the parts of Heaven did upward move,
 The subtle ether thus combin'd above;
 And vastly wide, and spread o're every place
 Contains the rest within her kind embrace.¹

One might say these lines are redolent and fragrant of morn herself: then, a little further on, he tells of the stable peace of this great sphere in highly beautiful language:

¹ *Lucr.* v. 458 (Creech).

Thence Seas, thence Air, thence Ether, every Mass
 Distinct from others, took its proper place :
 All Fluids, and All differently light,
 And therefore reach't the less or greater height.
 Then Liquid Ether did the farthest rear,
 And lies on softest Beds of yielding Air ;
 But yet its parts ne're mix, whilst Winds do blow,
 And rapid storms disturb all here below ;
 They undisturb'd move round the steady Pole,
 And sun and stars with constant motion roll :
 For that by constant turns the sky may move,
 The constant motions of the waters prove ;
 This thing the mighty Mass, the Ocean, shows,
 For that at settled hours still ebbs and flows.¹

655

These he sets forth, almost in the manner of Aristotle. For it was the teaching of Aristotle that neither the celestial sphere nor its inhabitants will ever be subject to the least change. 'Neither is there any changeability of any of the existences marshalled most outwardly upon the orb of things. But unchangeable and impassive, enjoying the best and most independent life, they continue through all eternity.'² So true is it that even the speculative dreams of philosophers are inspired at times to hint at some most sacred truth.

And that famous passage concerning the gods of Epicurus will be seen to tend the same way :

For whatsoere 's Divine must live in Peace,
 In undisturb'd and everlasting ease ;
 Not care for us, from fears and dangers free,
 Sufficient to its own felicity :
 Nought here below, Nought in our power it needs ;
 Ne're smiles at good, ne're frowns at wicked deeds.³

Moreover, it would be strange indeed, should a poet, whose mind seems to leap forth into the void spaces of the heavens, not take pre-eminent pleasure in their bril-

¹ Lucr. v. 498 (Creech).

² *De Caelo*, i. c. 9.

³ Lucr. i. 57 (44) (Creech).

liance and unadorned beauty. On this subject, the chief passage is that which deals with the ever-constant flow of rays of light : which, moreover, like many ideas met with in the poem, would seem to harmonize not badly with the modern theories of physical science :

But more, the Air thro' all the mighty Frame
Is chang'd each hour, we breathe not twice the same :
Because as all things waste, the parts must flie
To the vast sea of Air : they mount on high,
And softly wander in the lower sky.
Now did not this the wasting things repair,
All had been long ago dissolv'd, all Air.
Well then, since all things waste, their vital chain
Dissolv'd, how can the frame of Air remain ?
It rises from, and makes up things again.

Beside, the sun that constant spring of Light
Still cuts the Heaven with streams of shining white,
And the decaying Old with New supplies ;
For every portion of the beam that flies
Is but short-liv'd ; it just appears and dies.¹

656 There is, too, something wonderfully fascinating and elevating in the passage where he sets forth his various speculations concerning the stars as they seem to career through the void expanse : I submit a few lines out of many which might be selected :

Or else the Orbs may lie at rest above,
Steddy and fixt, and only stars may move ;
Because the Fires, confin'd to little space,
Grow fierce and wild and seek a larger place,
And thus thro' the vast Heaven begin their Race.
Or else external Air or subtle wind
May whirl them round ; or they may move to find
Their nourishment, and run where food invites
And kindly calls their eager Appetites.²

Do we not all feel this a most splendid picture, this simile of a flock or herd widely scattered over the vast field of

¹ *Lucr.* v. 276 (Creech).

² *Lucr.* v. 518 (Creech).

the ether ? especially if, to some of us, the idea has occurred spontaneously in our childhood ; and this I can well believe to have been the experience of many.

Finally, Lucretius is highly excited and joyously and freely borne out of himself at any mention of swift movement, so that this third splendour may be suitably associated with those just mentioned : namely, crystal light and endless space. For example, take those exquisitely clear lines concerning the restlessness of matter : they too breathe the very spirit of a morning hymn :

For when the Morning climbs the eastern Skies,
And tuneful birds salute her early rise,
In every grove and wood with joy appear,
And fill with ravishing sounds the yielding Air ;
We see how swift the beams of th' Rising Sun
Shoot forth : their race is finished when begun ;
From Heaven to Earth they take their hasty flight,
And guild the distant Globe with gawdy light :
But this thin vapor, and this glittering ray
Thro' a meer void make not their easie way,
But with much trouble force a passage thro'
Resisting Air and therefore move more slow.
Nor are they seeds, but little bodies joyn'd, 657
And adverse motions in small space confin'd :
And therefore from without resisting force,
And inbred jars, must stop their eager course.
But solid seeds, that move thro' empty space,
And all whose parts do seek one common place,
Whom nothing from without resists, than light
And beams more swift, must make their hasty flight,
And in that time a larger distance flie,
Whilst the sun's lazy rays creep thro' our skie.¹

All these passages seem to establish the conclusion to which our discussion has so long been tending—namely, that these Epicurean speculations concerning the general scheme of the universe, frigid and barren as they seem to

¹ Lucr. ii. 143 (Creech).

us with our greater knowledge, perhaps commended themselves to Lucretius because they were connected and mixed up with those visions, or rather phantoms, to which he was so devoted, of infinite space, of fathomless depths of light, of numbers beyond all count.) We can well suppose that, while yet a boy, he was familiarized with exposed and lofty cliffs, from which a vast outlook over the Ocean or the sky was open to him. And who will doubt he felt a sort of sensuous delight, whensoever, rapt in contemplation, he gazed forth upon that free and immense Void which plays so great a part in the teaching and philosophy of Epicurus? Suppose him, too, to have been accustomed to gaze upon the sky and the sun with a cultured sympathy; to have been endowed with a power of vision which watched eagerly the rise and setting of the sun: and I should suppose the ideas with which the Epicurean school busied itself would pre-eminently delight such a man, when he once encountered their speculative dream of the phantoms and appearances given forth, hither and thither, from each object of sight. Then as regards restless motion, there is little need to point out that the lightning-swift career of the Seeds, as they are called, must have made deep impression on a poet, so delighting in swiftest natural movements of all kinds; storms, for instance, thunderbolts, and flashes of light.

- 658 Finally, the whole fabric of the universe as conceived by Epicurus was moved and sustained by some indefinable force which those who deny it to be the force of destiny, yet feel to be very real and beyond all power of control: how, then, could a man, who from his earliest years had been wont to seize eagerly upon the far and wide scattered suggestions of Nature's hidden forces, possibly fail to be fascinated with this? For instance: just consider what he says in the very introduction to his whole poem concerning the blind force of the winds:

For first the winds disturb the seas, and tear
 The stoutest ships, and chase clouds thro' the Air :
 Sometimes thro' humble Plains their violent course
 They take and bear down Trees with mighty force :
 Sometimes they rise so high, their strength so great,
 With furious storms they lofty Mountains beat,
 And tear their woods.

These must be Bodies, tho' unseen they be,
 Which thus disturb Heaven, Earth, Air and Sea ;
 Which hardest Oaks and Rocks, and all things tear,
 And snatch them up in whirlings thro' the Air.

He then compares the phenomenon with the rush of waters, as one whose ear had taught him that the sounds of forest and sea are wonderfully alike, both suggesting, and not doubtfully, a power transcending humanity :

They all rush on, as headlong Rivers flow
 Swoln big with falling showers or melting snow :
 Those Rocks and Trees o'return, and weighty Beams,
 And whirl their conquer'd prey in rapid streams ;
 No Bridge can check, no force the stream controle,
 It grows more wild and fierce, and beats the Mole :
 Ruine and Noise attend where e're it flows,
 It rolls great stones, and breaks what dare oppose :
 So rush the blasts of wind, which like a flood,
 Which way so e're they tend, drive rocks and wood,
 And All before them : sometimes upwards bear
 In rapid turns, and whirl them in the Air.¹

Further, unless I mistake, Lucretius himself confesses that he was chiefly attracted to the Epicurean camp, because 659 the philosophy of the sage was so largely concerned with all that is immense and boundless. Thus we have those often-quoted lines :

Thro' all he past
 The strongest bounds that powerful Nature cast :
 His vigorous and active Mind was hurl'd
 Beyond the flaming limits of this World
 Into the mighty space, and there did see
 How things begin.²

¹ Lucr. i. 272 (Creech).

² Lucr. i. 73 (Creech).

Nay, further, he declares that that which brought honour to the master would bring relief and solace to his pupils :

For when I hear thy mighty Reasons prove
This World was made without the Powers above,
All fears and terrors waste, and fly apace ;
Thro' parted Heavens I see the Mighty space,
The Rise of Things, the Gods, and happy Seats,
Which storm or violent Tempest never beats ;
Nor snow invades, but with the purest Air
And gawdy light diffus'd, look gay and fair.¹

And he proceeds joyfully to celebrate how, under his master's guidance and discovery, the path lies clear, not only to highest heights, but to hidden depths :

And thro' the earth I can distinctly view
What underneath the busie Atoms do.
From such like thoughts I mighty pleasure find,
And silently admire thy strength of Mind ;
By whose one single force to curious eyes
All naked and expos'd whole Nature lies.²

Thus we have the poet's own, almost express, testimony concerning himself and his poems. Indeed, the thing is plain. Nothing more decisively moved him to attach himself to Epicurus than the fact that his school, as it seemed, afforded splendid conceptions whereby one might contemplate this same boundless and undefined domain, those immense and serene expanses, that marvellous rapidity of motion. Well, therefore, does he deserve to be enrolled among the lovers of Nature, since just those qualities in a philosophical theory, decide his adhesion as a disciple, which that philosophy shares in common with the
660 external features of earth and sky. If, however, we have with sufficient probability conjectured that the very essence of the Lucretian muse lies in his delight in Nature, there will be, I apprehend, no necessity to quote an array of examples of that well-known quality whereby such poets,

¹ Lucr. iii. 16 (Creech).

² Lucr. iii. 26 (Creech).

for the most part, declare their own leaning and partiality. Such passages may be frequently met with in Lucretius, and are (I had almost said) no less Virgilian than Virgil himself. Who of all the poets has touched with more exquisite art that one single chord, as it may well be called, which, once struck, we all—except, perhaps, here and there, one or two of less sensitive feeling and with little power of enjoying any such pleasures—feel to call out an echo in our inner spirit? So in music, to the judgement of trained ears even isolated notes are said to give sufficient suggestion of a complete harmony. Of this quality is this splendid phrase :

—totum *circumtremere* aethera signis.¹

And this, said of torches :

tremere ignibus instant,
Instant, nec loca lux inter quasi rupta relinquit.²

And perhaps we may fairly add what, in another passage, is said of the moisture rising from the surface of the sea :

validi verrentes aequora venti
Diminuunt, radiisque *retexens* aetherius sol :³

—that is, if we may believe the word 'retexens' ('decomposing') was introduced advisedly, seeing that it brings the process before our very eyes. For it relates to those threadlike films of vapour which we usually see drawn up from the sea towards the lower rim of a cloud behind which we know the sun to be hidden, when these bright lines look as if some one were unravelling a web and drawing out the threads one by one.

¹ i. 1088 : 'the whole ether round *bickers* with signs.' (Munro.)

² v. 299 : 'are eager to *bicker* with fires, eager I say : nor is the light ever broken off nor does it quit the spots illuminated.' (Munro.)

³ v. 267 : 'The seas are lessened by the strong winds sweeping over them and by the ethereal sun *decomposing* them with his rays.' (Munro.)

unravelling

661 Even if these instances seem far-fetched to any one, yet I make certain, all will agree that they proclaim Lucretius second to none, either in that easy mastery which consists in expressing a whole thought in a single line, or in the reserve and modesty he exhibits in this field. For he selects a few out of many traits and qualities, and those such as at once strike a simple masculine mind. He does not pursue or dwell upon that which delights him: he feels awe, if one may so say, before the majesty of Nature. And thus he bears the palm from two of the greatest poets, each in their own line; he rivals Virgil in selection and reserve, and Ovid in easy power.

For the rest, since there yet remain not a few remarks, nor those unimportant, which I desire to submit concerning Lucretius, I just take the opportunity to add here by way of termination, certain exquisite lines touching first the simple country life, and next, a father's untimely death—a second common theme of Poetry. Whenever I read them I am filled with admiration at the poet's tact and judgment in withholding his hand at the exactly fitting moment: yet still more keenly am I impressed by his simple passion for Nature, so unpretentious and unartificial. But let us see:

What tho' no Boys of Gold
Adorn the Walls, and sprightly Tapers hold;
Whose beauteous rays scattering the gawdy light,
Might grace the feasts and revels of the Night?
What tho' no Gold adorns, no Musick's sound
With doubled sweetness from the roofs rebound?
Yet underneath a loving Myrtle's shade,
Just by a purling stream supinely laid,
When Spring with fragrant flowers the Earth hath
spread,
And sweetest Roses grow around our head,
Envied by wealth and power, with small expence
We may enjoy the sweet delights of sense.¹

¹ *Lucr.* ii. 24 (Creech).

And finally of all the dirges ever chanted over the dead, 662
the essential fragrance and central essence seem concentrated in this brief and lovely strain :

Ay, but he now is snatcht from all his joys :
No more shall his chaste Wife, and prattling Boys
Run to their Dad with eager haste, and strive
Which shall have the first kiss, as when alive.
Ay, but he now no more from wars shall come,
Bring peace and safety to his Friends at home.
Wretched, O wretched man ! One fatal day
Hath snatcht the vast delights of Life away !¹

¹ Lucr. iii. 907 (Creech).

The simplicity of the poetic machinery in Lucretius. The two methods by which Poets describe what is legendary and foreign to their readers. Analogy as a universal description of a particular detail. Instances of both methods given from Lucretius, though he uses each rarely. He took special delight in contemplating clouds and forests. He may be compared in some ways with the renowned Florentine, Dante.

I SEE that while I have been pointing out the delight which Lucretius felt in the beauty of sky and earth, which is the first point that I undertook to prove, I have unwittingly introduced not a little that more properly belongs to my second point. The object of this was to show that the reason why this remarkable poet devoted himself to the study of Nature was that in it he found on all sides traces of that which is infinite and mysterious: whether it was that his mind was able, at least according to the view of Epicurus, to roam free and untrammelled through vast and infinite spaces 'beyond the flaming walls of the world', or whether it arose from the innumerable company of atoms conceived as flying hither and thither in the void; or, lastly, was due to the marvellous swiftness wherewith, as he supposed, all things in the universe are at all times
 664 being carried and driven along. Let us now proceed to certain other details, neither unrelated to this subject nor, as I trust, in themselves altogether without interest.

And first we may remark, that it is quite possible that Lucretius willingly dispensed with much of the machinery and the many devices which modern poets delight in: they, when they sing the praises of Nature, think that they have achieved nothing unless they produce some fact never heard of before, but which their own eyes have

witnessed ; or at least unless they can describe each detail at great length and in a way never used before. Hence we have those far-fetched stories, now from the Indies, now from the remotest West, such as a description of an Indian fig-tree,¹ or of American birds, or whatever else reading of many books may have particularly impressed upon learned men.

I should not, of course, deny that the most delightful poetry is sometimes largely concerned with things which the writer has never seen. Who would maintain so foolish an opinion ? especially among ourselves, who are wont, in the whole of this region of Art, to ascribe the primary, or, at all events, a prominent influence to Fancy. But of one thing I make no doubt : where any writers in this class of poetry have conspicuously won favour and applause, it has been very largely due to one of two causes : either because that which they have made peculiarly their own has in it some quality which is obviously common to all nations and regions : or because, by a certain law of 'analogy', there is a real correspondence between things known and things unknown.

And first of all to explain, briefly, what I mean by 'analogy'—we see that not only the quality and character of natural scenes, but also the manners of men, their abilities, their religious instincts, while they exhibit an endless variety, dependent on the temperament of each nation, its geography and its history, yet at bottom always retain a strange common likeness. Consequently, when we know what a man has actually done, it will not be hard to infer what he will do, making allowance, of course, for difference of time and circumstance. For instance, among poets within our own memory, not one has more nearly touched men's sympathies than he who has sung of Thalaba's youth, his wanderings, his death-won triumph.

¹ See *The Curse of Kehama*, xiii.

Yet the tendency of his whole story is, at least on the surface, to commend to us the Ottoman faith and the monstrosities of Mahomet. Notwithstanding, it has given pleasure and, in my opinion, always will give pleasure, even to those who are whole-heartedly devoted to the pure and sacred Truth : mainly and especially, if I mistake not, by reason of the implied, underlying comparison which the reader's mind spontaneously institutes for itself. While we read, we reflect, that is to say, how one affected and influenced, in this or that manner, by these erroneous beliefs, would develop when once brought to a knowledge of sound and pure religious truth. In fact, in modern times, good and pious men take pleasure in the study of the ancient poets largely for this simple reason, that they can tacitly transfer to the Great and Good God that which is said in Homer (it may be) or in Pindar, in honour of the fabled Jove, regarding them as dimly feeling after Him and foreshadowing the true Revelation and Sacrifice. And thus a true religious reserve is carefully protected : genuine piety is not exposed to the eye of men and the full light of publicity, yet it is present, hidden behind a veil, at one time and place the veil of ancient Greek worship, at another that of modern errors.

But it would be endless to set forth all that might be said in this connexion. For the principle is of widest application, and is applicable not only to poetry, but to all pleasurable arts which touch humanity. Why else (for 666 instance) are the ruined remains of ancient temples, ' preserved through many years by ancestral reverence ',¹ gazed upon with tender regard, even by those who are wont, with greatest vehemence, to revolt from and condemn the creeds and ceremonies which they typify ? Simply because they are conscious of some vague ' traces of their own flame '—as Virgil puts it.²

¹ *Aen.* ii. 715.

² *Aen.* iv. 23.

Take again the analogy of men who are travelling in the dark, or when the moon gives but a sparing and niggardly light, along a path that they have never traversed before : do they not ordinarily try to find some point, however vague, of likeness with places that they have long known and loved ? And this gives them even more comfort and pleasure than would the beauty of the scene itself.

Now this is exactly the method and expedient of those poets who aim at describing trees or wild animals or the manners of men or scenes of nature, which are removed by a whole hemisphere, it may be, from themselves and their own experience. The most successful in this sphere are not those who most laboriously depict the native colour and qualities of things, but those rather who can now and then, as it were with a stroke of the pen, reproduce just those things which are dear and familiar to the reader : the touch may be slight and faint, yet it is sufficient to recall the scene. This it is, in my view at any rate, which makes Virgil's book concerning bees so sweet and delightful to our minds.

So far, then, of that 'analogy' which, when correctly and fitly observed, would seem the chief reason why poets have sometimes been quite successful when putting before us minutely detailed description of things never seen by themselves or their readers. I now pass to consider the other method which I spoke of as being also used by them. According to Horace, it argues a high degree of poetic gift to be able 'to put one's own stamp on what is a common theme' : *difficile est hæc hæc communia dicere* - to make the common

'Tis hard, I grant, to treat a subject known *not one's own*
And hackneyed, so that it may look one's own.¹ *hæc hæc communia dicere*

With ourselves nowadays, however, this standard of criticism must be, as it were, inverted, and praise is rather to be accorded when an author succeeds in putting a common 667

¹ *Ars Poetica*, 128 (Conington).

stamp upon what is his own. I will give some illustrations to explain what I mean by this. Suppose that an English painter represents trees, wild animals, towns, men's features and garb, such as he imagines them to be, say in Africa or any other quarter of the world; but he nevertheless tones the whole work with a certain natural colour equally appropriate to all regions and localities. There are the light of heaven and the sun, the waters of the sea, the bloom of the flower, the varying play of sunbeam and shadow. The result is that our mind passes from what is peculiar to one spot into that which is universal; we are not cramped up in a narrow sphere which does not interest or inspire us. Now we may well suppose that just this is the method and principle of Poetry: indeed, pastoral poetry can only win praise and give pleasure if it is not wholly without some reference, however slight, to things and objects which, being scattered over and common to the whole world, appeal equally to all: such as the deeps of air or sea, the murmur of the forest, the liquid flow of streams. By way of illustration, take this splendid picture by Virgil himself, a picture which I should place at the head of all such descriptions:

In fair Calabria's woods a snake is bred,
With curling crest, and with advancing head:
Waving he rolls, and makes a winding track:
His belly spotted, burnish'd is his back.
While springs are broken, while the southern air
And dropping heav'ns the moisten'd earth repair,
He lives on standing lakes and trembling bogs,
And fills his maw with fish, or with loquacious frogs:
But when, in muddy pools, the water sinks,
And the chapt earth is furrow'd o'er with chinks,
He leaves the fens, and leaps upon the ground,
And, hissing, rolls his glaring eyes around.
With thirst inflam'd, impatient of the heats,
He rages in the fields, and wide destruction threats.¹

¹ *Georg.* iii. 425 (Dryden).

We positively seem to see the creature gliding along before our eyes : yet to confess the truth I am conscious 668 of something ^{yet} lacking, something which will make it clear that the story is told by a poet and not merely by a naturalist. And this is furnished, and most beautifully, by the lines that follow :

Oh ! let not sleep my closing eyes invade
 In open plains, or in the secret shade,
 When he, renew'd in all the speckled pride
 Of pompous youth, has cast his slough aside,
 And in his summer liv'ry rolls along,
 Erect, and brandishing his forked tongue,
 Leaving his nest, and his imperfect young,
 And, thoughtless of his eggs, forgets to rear
 The hopes of poison for the following year.¹

The line :

In open plains, or in the secret shade,

by a strange magic suddenly brings the whole picture into the common field of general feeling : just in the same way as musicians are sometimes wont to introduce some simple air, familiar to us all, amid intricate and subtle harmonies : and by this expedient those who would else have only applauded coolly and formally are stirred to enthusiasm.

Ovid, too, has some lines which may in this connexion usefully be compared with Virgil. In each poet mortals of divine parentage are described as returning to their ancestral home ; in Ovid it is Phaethon ; in Virgil Aristaeus. Each poet describes the divine palace, Ovid that of the Sun, Virgil that of the Nereids. Mark, however, the wide difference between them. Ovid's lines dazzle, glitter, and ring in our ear : all in his description is foreign to earth, miraculous in scale :

The Sun's bright Palace, on high Columns rais'd,
 With burnish'd Gold and flaming Jewels blaz'd ;

¹ *Georg.* iii. 436 (Dryden).

The Folding Gates diffus'd a Silver Light,
 And with a milder Gleam refresh'd the Sight ;
 Of polish'd Iv'ry was the Cov'ring wrought :
 The Matter vied not with the Sculptor's Thought,
 For in the Portal was display'd on high
 (The work of Vulcan) a fictitious sky.

O'er all, the Heav'ns refulgent Image shines ;
 On either Gate were six Engraven Signs.¹

Then a little further on :

The God sits high, exalted on a throne
 Of blazing Gems, with Purple Garments on.²

- 669 There is not a single word carrying the faintest suggestion of the ordinary everyday aspect of the sky and earth which we all know and love : unless, indeed, we are to believe that Ovid, when he wrote these lines, saw in his mind's eye the sky at sunrise, with its golden and fiery splendours. Certainly something like this is not altogether inaptly figured by the mention of the lofty columns of surpassing brilliance, having, on each side, widespread doors of purest silver, while above spreads a firmament of marble or of ivory. Then, seeing that the poet imagines as graven thereon, the heaven, sea, lands, with figures of Nymphs and all the rest of the general panoply and array of the world we see around us ; perhaps his intention was by such device to hint at the marvellous variety of the shapes and forms which any one who is accustomed to enjoy that pageant is wont to trace out or imagine in the clouds, especially at morn. Such an interpretation may perhaps be forced : but even allowing it to have been in the poet's mind, yet it does not bring the poem under the law which we are laying down. For the poet was bound at least to let fall some indication, however slight and passing, sufficient to lead the mind of the reader to the

¹ Ovid, *Metam.* ii. 1 (Addison).

² Ovid, *Metam.* ii. 24 (Addison).

point. But there is nothing of the kind here, not the faintest trace. Wherefore Ovid is entitled to praise for poetically presenting strange and rare things with ingenious skill, but not as celebrating well-known and cherished objects with love and sympathy.

And now compare with his lines these of Virgil :

‘ Conduct my son, conduct him here :
 ‘Tis lawful for the youth, deriv’d from gods,
 To view the secrets of our deep abodes.’
 At once she wav’d her hand on either side ;
 At once the ranks of swelling streams divide,
 Two rising heaps of liquid crystal stand,
 And leave a space betwixt, of empty sand.
 Thus safe receiv’d, the downward track he treads,
 Which to his mother’s wat’ry palace leads.
 With wond’ring eyes he views the secret store
 Of lakes, that, pent in hollow caverns, roar ;
 He hears the crackling sounds of coral woods,
 And sees the secret source of subterranean floods ;
 And where distinguish’d in their several cells,
 The fount of Phasis, and of Lycus, dwells ;
 Where swift Enipeus in his bed appears,
 And Týber his majestic forehead rears :
 Whence Anio flows, and Hypanis profound
 Breaks through th’ opposing rocks with raging sound ;
 Where Po first issues from his dark abodes,
 And, awful in his cradle, rules the floods ;
 Two golden horns on his large front he wears,
 And his grim face a bull’s resemblance bears :
 With rapid course he seeks the sacred main,
 And fattens, as he runs, the fruitful plain.¹

670

All this descriptive detail as to the hidden source of rivers, no less, I apprehend, suggests the realm of fable, is no less remote from the test of our daily vision and the ordinary course of our life, than the account given by Ovid of the celestial palace of the Sun. But Virgil, with most delightful skill and charm, has succeeded, merely by the

¹ *Georg.* iv. 358 (Dryden).

reference to caverns, in communicating in full force and commending the whole scene to all who have ever delighted in deep caves, 'fresh water and seats of natural stone',¹ and all the other adjuncts whereby the wide expanse of shore, the moan of the sea, nay, the beating of the waves, and the dull indefinite tremor, which, as we all know, pervades such regions, soothe and win man's spirit; the sense of touch, no less than those of eye and ear, seeming to suggest the near presence of infinity. Just by this one mention of these delightful recesses, the poet, I repeat, somehow softens his fabled story and lifts it into a region where men's minds feel free to range.

We learn from these examples that great writers, whenever they painted a scene which was either remote and foreign to the reader, or perhaps too obviously fabulous, were wont to meet the difficulty by a twofold device: either they threw light on the whole scene by the help of some analogy; or else they seemed, as if by accident, to bring out some familiar and homely detail, where the best light could fall upon it. Now let us go back to Lucretius: who while he does not offer many instances of what is
671 fabulous or foreign to daily use, is not, nevertheless, wholly lacking in passages which seem to admit of this artistic expedient. He presents in one passage an elaborate and magnificent description of the rites of the Great Mother, Cybele: and, after having therein detailed much, absolutely foreign and abhorrent to the ideas and manners of his own age, it is very noticeable how happily he brings the whole story down to the common sympathies, which all can share alike: and this by one allusion to childhood and the games in which all children take part:

Here some in Arms dance round among the crowd,
Look dreadful gay in their own sparkling blood,
Their crests still shaking with a dreadful Nod.

¹ *Aen.* i. 167.

Those represent those armed Priests, who strove
To drown the tender cries of Infant Jove ;
By dancing quick they made a greater sound,
And beat their Armor as they danc't around,
Lest Saturn should have found and eat the Boy,
And Ops for ever mourned her prattling Joy.¹

Again, he has shown how effective 'analogy' can be in several places, when his reasoning grows rather abstruse, but the most striking instance is where an earthquake, a catastrophe almost unknown at Rome, is attributed to the blind force and rage of the winds :

Thus Aegae, thus Phenician Towns did fall,
The greedy earth gap'd wide, and swallow'd all :

But if the Vapor's cold, too weak the wind
To force a way, if by strong bounds confin'd,
It spreads o'er all the Pores the Earth contains,
And brings a shivering cold thro' all the veins,
As when Frost comes, it brings a trembling chill,
And makes our members shake against our will.²

This is indeed consummately done : the whole earth is made to shiver, as if it were endowed with life : the result is that he manages to bring clearly before his readers a very rare and unusual occurrence, and almost makes them feel it.

But, as I have said, such instances are few and far 672 between in Lucretius : inasmuch as he, for the most part, preferred to keep within the sphere of common life. It would be hard to name any poet who is content with such slight material for his poetry : grant him the tiniest outlook upon the sky or the ocean, and he will find a source of delight there, and space enough for the quest of reasonings and illustrations to defend the philosophy of his master Epicurus. And truly, indeed, wheresoever we turn, all things are full of mystery and high argument. No need

¹ Lucr. ii. 629 (Creech).

² Lucr. vi. 585 (Creech).

for distant journeyings, nor great array of books and authorities, nor painful and curious search into ancient histories : only cast your eye around, there will be no lack of subject material, if once the mind is thoroughly imbued with some true principle, or at least with some imaginary dreams which can serve as a principle. In truth, the theories which give us the greatest pleasure, as we conceive or dwell upon them, are those which seem beyond the reach of the ordinary run of mankind, and yet deal with subjects which all see and talk about. A writer may well feel proud if he has described with more than usual skill a subject that is foreign or obsolete, but to endow with fresh and original brilliance some familiar and trite field of thought, we hold to imply truly exceptional and all but divine power of insight. Nay, the man who is not merely able to feel and trace some hidden power which prevails through the broad world, in the sun, the sky, the movement of water and air, but to reduce it to rule and law and stated modes of action, seems almost gifted with another sense beyond the five known to Nature. So that none need feel surprise if a poet whom we have decided to be mainly devoted to all that is mysterious and infinite, should in large measure have spontaneously spent his powers on subjects open to all and, as one may say, met with in the highway of life.

Yet at times even Lucretius himself lingered with evident
673 zest over subjects highly intricate and involved. For instance, no one has ever more finely and exquisitely painted the form, colour, and movement of clouds. He shows, too, in no uncertain manner, that he takes special delight in roaming through forests and all densely wooded regions. Yet each of these themes appears at first sight to be exactly the opposite of those before referred to ; namely, the open sky, the boundless ocean, and the clear unspotted brilliance and colour of the dawn.

But I should unhesitatingly maintain that even here Lucretius is quite consistent. For in the case both of clouds and woods the eye roams along uncertain tracks, as it were, and refuses to be tied down within fixed and bounded limits. As for the clouds, they change utterly and constantly even while we gaze at them. And where we light on a region more thickly wooded than ordinary, and impenetrable to the eye even in leafless winter, do we not all feel heightened interest in speculating what it may conceal and where we shall find an exit? But if, may be, such lonely retreats follow one after another in prolonged succession, we are then filled with still vaguer and darker feeling, as if approaching nearer and nearer to some mysterious and sacred haunt. In short, it is obvious that in each case, that of clouds and that of forests, there is something specially attractive to those who love mystery and infinity: for at no single moment can one anticipate what will happen next. Such thoughts as these enable us to see that there is one clear principle in that poetry which, while satisfied with the simplest possible material and machinery, yet takes delight in the varying forms of clouds and the tortuous mazes of a forest, shifting, ill-defined, and complex as they are. But now let us quote a few examples from Lucretius himself.

And, first of all, let us consider such as are concerned with clouds: the field which of the two seems the more congenial to the spirit of Lucretius. For it is to be found everywhere and is daily before the eye of all. Moreover, it carries with it all the qualities which he loved: the endless deeps of heaven, an air now gloomy, now serene, the rain mingled with the clouds, the very swiftest movement. Finally, all is combined in such a way that while no one who has eyes to see can deny its beauty, yet its inner and real principle is mysterious to all. And there is another peculiar and striking constituent in cloud regions,

which I do not think any language can indicate more fully and finely than that of the poem itself :

But now, besides those subtle forms that rear
From Bodies, Thousand new are fram'd in Air,
Fashioned by chance ; and these, when born on high,
Do change their shapes, and wanton in the sky ;
Then joyn in various forms, grow thick, and move
Like clouds combin'd, and darken all above,
Fanning the air with motion.¹

I cannot pass on, gentlemen, without specially commending to your admiration the expression 'fanning the air with their motion', for nothing could more delightfully make us feel that we are in the presence of a poet given to intense and rapt study of these phenomena. One sees easily that Lucretius was a man who was at once arrested and then carried away by any sight of earth or heaven, like a swimmer delighting in the current that bears him along. But to proceed with the quotation :

Hence Prodigies, hence some Gigantick war,
Marshall'd i' th' Air, looks dreadful from afar,
And shadows all : hence Mountains seem to flie,
And scatter'd Rocks cut thro' the wounded Sky ;
Hence other clouds do frightful creatures show ;
We stare amaz'd, and wonder at below.²

675 Some have supposed that these ideas are borrowed from Aristophanes, who in one of his comedies makes fun out of the shapes of the clouds :

¹ Lucr. iv. 130 (Creech). Munro : 'But lest haply you suppose that only those idols of things which go off from things and no others wander about, there are likewise those which are spontaneously begotten and are formed by themselves in this lower heaven which is called air : these fashioned in many ways are borne along on high, and being in a fluid state cease not to alter their appearance and change it into the outline of shapes of every possible kind : as we see clouds sometimes gather into masses on high and blot the calm clear face of heaven, fanning the air with their motion.'

² Ibid. (Creech).

Socrates. You have perhaps sometimes observed in the sky, clouds resembling a centaur, a leopard, a wolf, a bull?

Strepsiades. To be sure; and what of that?

Socrates. They have power to transform themselves at will. Suppose, looking down, they behold some vicious creature with long locks, hairy as a beast, like Xenophantes' son: well, to show their contempt of him they take the form of centaurs.

Strepsiades. And when they see Simon, who embezzles public money, what then?

Socrates. To mimic him to the life they immediately appear as wolves.¹

To my mind, however, it is far more likely that each poet drew these similes from his own native stores. For why should we not suppose that each, gifted with taste and discernment as he was, would often contemplate these marvels of fleeting clouds, whether in a calm or stormy sky?

But dismissing this point, I should like you to consider whether this changing vision and scene of cloudland is not closely akin to the Epicurean theories concerning Images: precisely in the same way as those who gaze upon the depths of the blue air and the wide waters of ocean are from time to time inevitably reminded of the vast and boundless void. It would be strange, then, if Lucretius, the devoted admirer alike of Nature and Epicurus, did not eagerly fasten upon and delight in both these themes.

But towards the beginning of his Sixth Book the poet more fully reveals his own interests; he shows that by no ordinary effort of ear and of thought he has listened to and grasped the meaning of the varied sounds caused by colliding clouds: in fact, corresponding with their change of shape and motion, he even associates a special meaning with each sound. And in dealing with this subject Lucretius is true to one special characteristic of his style;

¹ Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 345.

for taking a simile from the routine of daily life, he illustrates by it each detail of the sky, and yet adds no touch of what is mean or commonplace. But let him speak for himself:

676 They give the crack, as o'er a Theater
 Vast curtains spread are ruffled in the Air,
 Or torn (for such a sound is often known
 From Thunder's crack) they give a mighty groan ;
 Or as spread cloaths, or sheets of Paper flie
 Before the wind and rattle o're the sky.¹

A few lines further on we have a simile which brings clouds and woods together :

 But more, 'tis Reason too that Noise should rise,
 When violent storms rage o'er the lower skies ;
 For thousand clouds appear, rough, close combin'd
 And thick, and able to resist the wind :
 Thus Noise must rise : as when the woods they wound
 The injur'd Boughs sigh forth a mournful sound :
 These winds do cut the clouds, and passing thro',
 With murmuring Sound fill all the Air below :
 For that the winds may break the clouds, and flie
 Thro' all resistance in the lower sky,
 'Tis easy to discover, since they break,
 And twist our Trees : yet here their force is weak.²

And then we have these lines which, like many others, place Lucretius before us as a most subtly keen observer of Nature, if ever there was one :

 But if the cloud is dry, and Thunder fall,
 A crackling Blaze doth rise, and spread o're all ;

¹ Lucr. vi. 107 (Creech). Munro : ' They also give forth a sound over the levels of the wide-stretching upper world just as at times a canvas-awning stretched over large theatres makes a creaking noise, when it tosses about among the poles and beams ; sometimes, too, rent by the boisterous gales, it madly howls and closely imitates the crackling noise of pieces of paper : this kind of noise, too, you may notice in thunder, when the winds whirl about with their blows and buffet through the air a hanging cloth or flying bits of paper.'

² Lucr. vi. 132 (Creech).

As when fierce Fires, prest on by Winds, do seize
 Our Laurel Groves, and waste the Virgin Trees,
 The Leaves all crackle : she that fled the chase
 Of Phoebus' Love, still flies the Flame's embrace.¹

From these lines the transition will be easy, I think, to our second point, his delight in forest scenes, where we have already shown that the poet who took special pleasure in all that is mysterious and infinite would naturally be glad to linger. And, for proving his feeling in this connexion, the often-quoted passage will be quite sufficient in which he declares the peculiar and pre-eminent sweetness he was wont to derive, from the mere fact that his task was a new one :

I Feel, I rising feel Poetick Heats ; 677
 And now inspir'd, trace o're the Muses Seats
 Untrodden yet : 'tis sweet to visit first
 Untoucht and Virgin Streams, and quench my Thirst ;
 I joy to crop fresh Flowers, and get a Crown
 For new and rare Inventions of my own ;
 So noble, great, and generous the Design,
 That none of all the Mighty Tuneful Nine
 E're grac'd a Head with Laurels like to Mine.²

Has any one ever, I would ask, delineated more faithfully and sweetly the feelings of those who roam in the summer woods, joying in each intricate pathway, and exulting in the notion that they may finally issue upon some hidden retreat as yet untrodden by man ?

What, too, are we to infer when a poet, who elsewhere in his great poem most rarely introduces fabled beings of

¹ vi. 149 (Creech). Munro : 'Again, if the cloud which receives the fire is drier, it is set on fire in an instant and burns with a loud noise, just as if a flame should range over the laurel-covered hills through a whirlwind and burn them up with its impetuous assault : and there is not anything that burns in the crackling flame with a more startling sound than the Delphic laurel of Phoebus.'

² Lucr. iv. 1 (Creech).

the kind, sympathetically names the Sylvan powers and makes them play their part ?

The Vulgar and the Neighbours think, and tell,
That there the Nymphs, and Fauns, and Satyrs dwell ;
And that their wanton sport, their loud delight,
Breaks thro' the quiet silence of the Night :
Their Musick's softest Ayr's fill all the Plains,
And mighty Pan, delights the list'ning swains ;
The Goat-fac'd Pan, whilst Flocks securely feed,
With long-hung lip he blows his Oaten Reed ;
The horn'd, the half-beast God, when brisk and gay,
With Pine-leaves crown'd provokes the swains to play.¹

And there are other lines which clearly suggest that he was at some time intimately acquainted with some forest-clad mountain, one of the Apennines perhaps, or Pelion :

But you will answer thus ; 'Tis often known
That stately Trees on lofty Mountains grown,
When beaten by a furious Southern blast,
Grow warm and hot, and so take Fire at last.
All this we grant—
Yet there's no actual fire, but seeds of Heat,
Which dasht together all this flame beget ;
For if i' th' wood such actual flame was held,
How could it for one moment be conceal'd ?
It streight would show its mighty force, and burn,
And Shrubs, and Trees, and all to ashes turn.²

Is it not plain that Lucretius maintains the same attitude whether he be concerned with the sky or the forest ?

¹ Lucr. iv. 584 (Creech).

² Lucr. i. 896 (Creech). Munro : ' But it often comes to pass on high mountains,' you say, ' that contiguous tops of tall trees rub together, the strong south winds constraining them so to do, until the flower of flame has broken out and they have burst into a blaze.' Quite true, and yet fire is not innate in woods : but there are many seeds of heat, and when they by rubbing have streamed together, they produce conflagrations in the forests. But if the flame was stored up ready made in the forests, the fire could not be concealed for any length of time, but would destroy forests, burn up trees indiscriminately.'

Things secret, infinite, obscure, in a word, all that is 678
mysterious, he fastens upon whenever met with, or pursues
when sighted afar off.

And lest it may be said that this combination of eager
delight in the deep passes and glooms of forests, with the
simplicity of which we have spoken was specially peculiar
321 to Lucretius, what if I should show that precisely the like
happened with another poet, who, of all others, seems most
closely to resemble him in his love for what is mysterious
and infinite? I mean the renowned Florentine, famous
for his threefold poem touching the threefold destinies of
such as have passed from this life. Every one who has
drunk, however sparingly, from that truly divine fountain
knows with what array of noblest poetry this poet illumined
a theme in itself unpromising enough; here we seem to
hear the sounds of sweet music: there to see the radiance
of celestial light, and here the dances of those who move
'in solemn troops and sweet societies'. To mention those
only pertaining to celestial Light: what a scene is that in
which that glorious Lady about to guide the poet through
the region of the Blessed, simply fixes their gaze upon
the Sun, and was thus enabled to translate him to the
Empyrean and to win her way thither herself! ¹ And at the
approach of some purified soul, as we are assured by the
poet, both the constellations and the shades of the sancti-
fied seem to smile and clothe themselves with new lustre! ²
And does not that remarkable fancy of the circle of beatified
spirits, ranged as stars, in the shape, at one time, of an
eagle, at another of a crown, ³ seem admirably in keeping
with this exalted and purest region of Heaven? Time
would assuredly fail me did I attempt all the examples of
this sort which may be found in this truly Divine Comedy.
All make manifest that in a theme wherein ordinary poets

¹ *Paradiso*, ii. 22-30 *et alibi*.

² *Ibid.* v. 106.

³ *Ibid.* xviii. 100-108; x. 64.

sink most grievously, Dante alone bore himself with
679 unerring sureness. While they, for the most part, transfer
material and earthly qualities to their Elysiums and
Paradises, he never admits to his ethereal region, either
the pleasantness of gardens nor the most refined beauty
of person : amply satisfied, as I said, with three elements—
Light, Motion, Music.

Now this same poet, who found such slight and scanty
materials perfectly sufficient for his purpose, elsewhere
makes it clear that he unboundedly delights in the charms of
tortuous woods, and dark and doubtful straying through
grove and mountain pass ; as, for instance, at the very
beginning of his great work, he tells us how he wandered
in some deep-wooded and gloomy valley : or, still more,
in that loveliest canto, where he pictures the earthly
Paradise.¹

Indeed, my own belief is that readers who take high
pleasure in the study of Dante, really experience to a great
degree just the same delight as those who rove freely
through pathless woods, little knowing at any stage what
they may encounter next. Thus what was said of Lucretius
a few sentences back is quite conceivable ; when a poet
is drawn by the glamour of whatever is mysterious and
infinite, he will take pleasure, not only in what lies
plain to view, such as the vast ocean and the far-off
constellations, but also in the deeps of cloudland and
the far-withdrawn passes of the forest.

But it is sufficient just to note this. Any one may
search out instances for himself, so long as he bears in
mind that to brace oneself whole-heartedly to the study
of the poem demands both time and trouble. Moreover,
he must not be discouraged and give up because of some
few features of it which seem too harsh, not to say revolting.
680 We must now revert to the point whence we digressed.

¹ *Purgatorio*, xxviii.

And I recognize, moreover, that the gravest question of all regarding Lucretius remains to be considered. For many, I believe, cannot understand how it comes about that a poet who would sweep away, not merely all existing forms of religion, but all religion whatsoever, has been able to win so exalted a place in the honoured band of poets. In the next place, then, I propose to deal with this question to the best of my power.

The reason why Christians view Lucretius, Epicurean though he is, more indulgently than his own countrymen did. The reason is partly his mental affliction : which is established both by external testimony and by internal indications. How mental unsoundness may contribute to poetic effect.

IN human friendships and social relations it is to many of us a most surprising fact that a strong affection is sometimes seen to exist between men of doubtful reputation and others of nobler character and life, and any one who has taken the slightest delight in Poetry knows that something of the same kind happens with regard to our feeling towards poets. A good and virtuous man, for instance, will not hesitate to yield himself to the charm of the poems of men, with whom he would never willingly be brought into personal contact. For, if we put aside for the present the well-known instability of human character, which often causes some men, almost from day to day, to change from what is best to what is worst, both in their outward life and in their writings, the truth is that we all recognize that heavenly things may be suggested by earthly, divine by human, I had almost said pure by impure. But, as a rule, authors do not deliberately sink to the lower level. They are wont, at utmost, to make some show of
 682 modesty and goodness. Even if they do not openly praise God's power, they not seldom imply that it exists and that it is nigh at hand. Yet Lucretius, on the contrary (for it is he whom we have in mind in this), denies, in set terms, that there exists anything above us which has the least influence on earthly and human affairs. Moreover, he professes this senseless creed, not merely here and there, as

if it fell from him incidentally : indeed, it asserts itself as the main feature of the plan and scheme of his whole poem :

Long time men lay opprest with slavish fear,
 Religion's Tyranny did domineer,
 Which being plac'd in Heaven look'd proudly down,
 And frighted abject spirits with her frown.
 At length a mighty one of Greece began
 T' assert the natural liberty of Man,
 By senseless terrors and vain fancies led
 To slavery : straight the conquer'd Fantoms fled.
 Not the fam'd stories of the Deity,
 Not all the Thunder of the threat'ning sky
 Could stop his rising Soul : thro' all he past
 The strongest bounds that powerful Nature cast :
 His vigorous and active Mind was hurl'd
 Beyond the flaming limits of this world
 Into the mighty Space, and there did see
 How Things begin, what can, what cannot be ;
 How All must dye, All yield to fatal force,
 What steddly limits bound their natural course ;
 He saw all this, and brought it back to us.
 Wherefore by his success our Right we gain,
 Religion is our subject, and we reign.¹

This was the reason why he held the Epicurean school in such regard and reverence : this is what won his admiration, in this he delighted, this is the teaching he made it his business to hand on to young and old. A hateful and mischievous doctrine, who can deny ? Yet his poem is read, learned by heart, recited, and quoted : indeed, he has earned himself a place, only second to one or two, among all who have devoted themselves to truly noble poetry. In fine, the man who declares, from first to last, that he acknowledges neither Author nor Ruler of Nature, is lauded as high-priest and interpreter of this very Nature herself. The fact is clear, or some might say it were 683

¹ Lucr. i. 63 (Creech).

incredible. I now propose to offer some few remarks as to the causes of it.

And they will indeed be evident enough, provided we have rightly reached our previous conclusion, that the sum and essence of Lucretius' poetry is centred in a sort of passion for the Infinite: that the poet delighted pre-eminently in all that is mysterious, vast, and boundless: and for this reason devoted himself to that Philosophy which roams over such fields as though it had a special ownership of them. I shall further enlarge on these questions, after having first adduced some other considerations which I ought to urge in self-defence, should it seem to any that I am too tolerant of the monstrous and impious teaching of Epicurus.

First of all, no one can be ignorant, that the case of any who in the age of Lucretius denied that the gods bestow any thought upon mortal men, is altogether different from that of those who deny it in these days, after we have witnessed so many miracles of divine goodness. At all events, the ancient school of Epicurus had many things to urge in extenuation, none of which any good man would permit himself to adopt nowadays.

Moreover, I rather think the more deeply attached a man is to divinely revealed truth, the more tolerant he is of the mad folly of these old philosophers. For such men realize, far better than the average, the great disadvantages the ancients laboured under, not through their own fault, but (as it would seem) by reason of the times in which they lived. For this cause they may at times be over-indulgent to ancient authors who held impious views concerning the gods. Indeed (if some recent writers will forgive me for saying it), when there is question of these monstrous theories of Epicurus, Cicero speaks in language more severe and impressive than do our own philosophers. This perhaps explains how it is that he never, so far as

I know, so much as mentions Lucretius in his philosophical writings : while he, nevertheless, in one passage, carefully details the succession of those who set themselves to com- 684 mend to a Roman public the idle speculations of Epicurus and his followers. Cicero tells us that about the time when the Romans first turned their attention to Philosophy there appeared a certain Amafinius : ' on the publishing of whose writings the people were deeply impressed, and enlisted themselves chiefly under this sect, either because the doctrine was more easily understood or that they were invited thereto by the enticements of pleasure ; or that, because there was nothing better, they laid hold of what was offered them.' It is quite clear that he has a supreme contempt for the popular judgement on the subject. He then proceeds to give his own opinion of those who taught these doctrines. ' But after Amafinius, when many of the same sentiments had written much about them, the Epicureans spread all over Italy : but that these doctrines should be so easily understood and approved of by the unlearned, is a great proof that they were not written with any great subtlety, and they think their establishment to be owing to this.'¹

At the very time Cicero was writing thus, it is probable that the poem of Lucretius was already published at Rome, and, I imagine, widely read and praised ; at all events, not many years after, Virgil thought it worthy of imitation. In fact, it had come into Cicero's hands : for he refers to it in one of his letters to his brother Quintus. ' Lucretius' poem,' he says, ' is just as you describe it : full of the brilliance of genius, but highly artificial.'² Should we be far wrong in assuming that it was this poem that the criticism which we just cited from the *Tusculan Questions* had really in view, though the name of the writer was suppressed ? For unless he was cursorily

¹ *Tusc. Disp.* iv. 3.

² *Ad Quint. Frat.* ii. 11.

dismissing the whole class for religious reasons as hateful and mischievous, I can hardly conceive it possible that he should pass over in absolute silence so weighty a writer, especially one who belonged wholly to Latium and the Latin race.

685 But, in truth, Cicero's writings afford numberless indications that devout and good men could not tolerate even the mere mention of Epicurus and his views concerning the immortal Gods. Those of modern times have been for the most part much more indulgent: the truth being that they look at the case from afar: regarding Epicureans, Stoics, and every ancient school of philosophy with almost equal indifference, feeling pity for all rather than indignation against any.

But if they judge so tolerantly such as maintain the teaching and method of Epicurus in cool logic after the manner of the schools, they would, I should suppose, be far more tolerant of a poet of like opinions: in the first place, he has the advantage of those numerous embellishments and digressions, whereby the more repulsive aspects of the doctrine may be kept in the background: then, too, by the very law and privilege of his function, he is allowed to touch on other things besides those he aims at and emphasizes. Consequently it is quite possible that, while the main argument of a poem avowedly and openly denies that there are gods in heaven above or in the world below, yet, nevertheless, its whole tenor and quality may be on the side of those who love true religion.

Such, then, are my reasons for holding that Lucretius, both as a poet and as writing in an age as yet unenlightened by revelation, should rightly be judged by a more kindly standard. And besides, there is a tradition that this great man was mentally afflicted, though not unfrequently regaining sanity and repose, and in lucid intervals, cheating, as it were, grievous disease with poetry and philosophy.

We have the express testimony of Eusebius, assuredly a careful writer, on this point. He records that in the year in which the triumvirate of Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus was renewed, there died T. Lucretius, a poet who, 'having been made insane by a love philtre, afterwards composed several books of poetry in his lucid intervals, 686 and died by his own hand at the age of 44.'¹

His statement that Cicero afterwards corrected the poem of Lucretius may seem perhaps the more probable since, in the letter before quoted, Cicero records that he had just read the poet's work, and at the same time makes mention of one Sallustius, who had written verses 'concerning Empedocles', which would, so far as the subject goes, if that is a fair inference from its title, be not altogether out of harmony with the *De Rerum Natura*.

But reverting to Lucretius' madness: not only does Eusebius record the fact in express terms, but it is quite credible that Statius alludes to it when he is recounting the chief names among Latin poets: 'The uncouth Muse of untamed Ennius yields the palm, so does the fierce rage of learned Lucretius, and he who leads the Argonauts over the seas, and he, too, who wrote of *Metamorphoses*: I may go further:—even the *Aeneid* itself pays honour to your Latin poem.'² This is what he says when praising Lucan and comparing him with those who had most won fame before him,—Ennius, Lucretius, Valerius Flaccus, Ovid: indeed, he holds that even Virgil himself is not too great to be compared with him. And the fact that he attributes to Lucretius both learning and a kind of fierce fury, is, assuredly, fully in keeping with one who, as Eusebius declares, wrote in the intervals of disease, after his mind had been unhinged. Nor has the story anything in radical disagreement with the tenor of his poem. For as to his

¹ Eusebius, quoted by Jerome, *Ol.* 171. 4, t. 8, 591.

² *Sylv.* ii. 7. 35.

orderly arrangement, his highly subtle reasoning, his exquisite and polished style : it is common knowledge that those who are either at certain times or on some particular subject mad and wild, at other times or with regard to other matters express themselves like staid and sober men. Indeed, to a great extent they handle the very subject of their madness with orderly method, they treat it with seriousness and sound judgement. Thus there is often, it is said, a method in men's madness. If one simply takes for granted the head and front of their delusion, all else follows in due place, in admirable sequence and perfect connexion, so that none need be surprised if a man supporting his views so ably by reason and argument might be insane.

Moreover, the circumstances that he never indulges in 299 'irony' (as it is called); that he touches nothing lightly 343 and playfully, in this respect being utterly different from Virgil; that he never advances his views with hesitation or modest diffidence, but insists on his master's teaching, as the utterance of an oracle, in things most mysterious and remote from human sense : nothing could be more in keeping than all this with the attitude and ways of those mentally distraught.

Now, supposing that Lucretius did labour under this disease, simple human feeling will, I think, teach us how far the fact goes to win a kindly judgement from every one, not only for minor faults and failings, but even for his central teaching, monstrous and almost impious as it is. For it both enlists sympathy and affords some ground for inferring that he erred, not of his own will, but through a kind of fatality.

And I regret indeed that our own time is not without instances which can be quoted to illustrate this subject. On the contrary, there is more than one such case, very striking and very sad. We have not yet, I apprehend,

forgotten a poet, at once of noble birth and noble genius, who in our youth was held to have borne the palm of poetic art and power from nearly all rivals. Ardent and 688 profound as his poetic gift was, he spoilt it all by associating it with the wild dreams of those who, whether or no they really believe that either no Supreme Power or, if any, a Malignant Power, rules the Universe, at any rate wish that it were so. The consequence was that one who should have been a minister and interpreter of the mysteries that lie hid in Nature, has, in spite of all the vehement passion and variety of his poetry, in the main given us nothing but the picture of his own mind and personality, excited now by an almost savage bitterness, and now by voluptuous exaltation. Yet it is marvellous how eagerly, not only refined and cultured men, but even women, read and re-read, indeed, in their devotion, actually copied out his verse : never even dreaming that they thereby in any way failed in reverence to true goodness. Already by that time the poet had, I believe, shown some indication of an ill-balanced mind. And so if there were anything base and irreverent in his writings, the more charitable readers attributed it not to his own fault, but to the afflicting visitation of Providence.

Another followed after him, of utterance, so far as regards this morbid philosophy, even more outrageous and unbridled, but in command of language and of rhythm an even greater master, and, as it would seem, of far more sensitive temperament. But it was fancied, with some probability, that even he was scarcely master of himself. In short, they were, and are now, both of them, considered rather as unhappy than as impious.¹ This fact should show us how strong is the tendency of human nature on the side of goodness and piety : since men actually have recourse

¹ Byron and Shelley. This should be compared with the Poem in *The Christian Year* for Palm Sunday.—W. L.

to a suspicion from which they naturally shrink and recoil rather than be brought to believe that the Deity can ever have been denied by any human being in his sound and sober senses. They would rather deem them insane than impious and wicked.

‘But,’ it will be asked, ‘could any one who was seeking relief for an unbalanced mind ever be satisfied by the data
689 of a philosophy so utterly chilling and barren : by Atoms, A great Void, by Images of Things, by Callousness of Feeling? Must not one, whom such trivialities pleased simply as a speculation, have emerged from them chilled and enfeebled himself? far less can they be a solace to those afflicted with grief and anxiety.’

I agree, entirely, yet I would suggest that the case of our Lucretius may have been quite different. If what we are told of him be true, I apprehend that those infinite worlds, those marshallings of atoms, found ready acceptance in his brain, not as one in search of immovable and true tranquillity, but rather for something which might, in the intervals of his malady, bring him some temporary distraction, laying to rest his anxieties, and yielding him some ray of hope. In short : the fault that we should find with Lucretius is very different from that which lies at the door of Democritus and Epicurus : they could contemplate without a pang the sight of a barren and formless universe, after denying any overruling Providence : his was the case of a troubled and diseased spirit, who, in an interval of his malady, merely seeks to find wide tranquil spheres in which to find rest, lest he may again, and more quickly than of wont, be thrown from his balance.

But now that such considerations have softened the judgement which we pass on the impiety of Lucretius, it remains to be considered, whether perhaps this very affliction itself—insanity—may not have in it something which arrests the mind, and, for a time, holds us like a tragedy,

rapt with a kind of pleasing horror. We hang on each word uttered by those who are insane, not knowing what they may say next. And although, in actual deed and truth, this is dangerous and disturbing, yet when depicted on the stage or in literature, it is not without an attraction of its own : exactly in the same way as, on the stage, we tolerate crimes, disgraceful deeds, murders, pestilence, and many monstrous deeds, which in real life would incur nothing but stern and fatal condemnation. This is the charm of those scenes in Shakespeare where we have at one time those lamentations of a father shamefully ill-used, at another of a maiden pining away through love, passages 690 which are universal favourites. And what of the impressive character of Hamlet himself, one of the truest to life and reality ? I doubt whether anything more wins our sympathies and finds its way to the heart, than those vague preludings of insanity, which even to the present day raise such points of contention among critics.

All these things a reader who aspires, rightly and in order, to follow the thread of argument in the *De Rerum Natura* would do well to remember. Let him not forget that he has to do with a most acute writer indeed, but with one who views everything, as it were, through a sort of cloud which somehow extravagantly distorts the shapes and dimensions of things. In truth, a reader should throughout have in mind the sad and pitiable lot of mortal men, the very finest fruits of whose genius are often closely akin to insanity. This kindly sympathy will not be unpleasing in itself nor wholly without use as we consider the ample force, now of tender, now of stern poetry which gushes everywhere from the Lucretian fount.

Perhaps, however, it may be worth while to notice here a few facts which seem to point to such insanity as we have described. In the first place, some persons may not unreasonably feel surprise that Lucretius speaks in such

high terms of Epicurus—a man, if ever there was one, wholly out of sympathy with all that appeals to a poet : void of ornament, frigid, and unattractive : almost wholly destitute of the vivid touch of genius, of the glow of passion, and of brilliance of style : so far, at all events, as we can infer from the fragments remaining to us of his writings, and the views held concerning him by the ancients. Yet, consider this eulogy of him, typical of many such in
691 the *De Rerum Natura* :

Thee, who hast Light from midst thick darkness
brought,
And Life's advantages and pleasures taught,
Thee, chiefest glory of the Grecian State,
I strictly trace ; willing to imitate,
Not contradict : for how can Larks oppose
The vigorous Swans ? They are unequal foes ;
Or how can tender Kids with feeble force
Contend in Racing with the noble Horse ?
Thou, Parent of Philosophy, hast shown
The way to Truth by Precepts of thy Own.
For as from sweetest Flowers the labouring Bee
Extracts the precious juyce ; Great Soul, from Thee
We all our Golden Sentences derive,
Golden and fit Eternally to live.¹

And, in the Epilogue to the same book, he insists that death is to be looked at without fear, since not only are Homer and other heroes dead, but :

Even Epicurus' race of Life is run,
That Man of Wit, who other men out-shon,
As far as meaner Stars the Mid-day Sun.²

Of course, whenever Plato represents the Sophists, or Cicero the Epicureans, as celebrating the greatness of their masters, one sees at once how absurd and foolish it all is, for the men are themselves absurd. But when we approach Lucretius, I, at all events, cannot easily escape the impres-

¹ Lucr. iii. 1 (Creech).

² Lucr. iii. 1055 (Creech).

sion that he was a man of such intense enthusiasm, that he wholly surrendered himself to what was merely an illusion of his own—which is exactly the way with madmen.

Next, it must, I think, strike any one, that Lucretius is wont to maintain his views with greater insistence and obstinacy than the force of his reasoning warrants: that he confuses and blends poor arguments with strong, dubious with certain, in the strangest fashion: obviously, he appraises his arguments, not by weight but by number, as the phrase goes: though, in spite of all this, no one can be more critically acute in such things. He delivers himself of all his statements with unvarying assurance, not to say audacity, as if they were the oracles of a shrine. He implies, and that very plainly, that he will take it 692 extremely ill should any one refuse to subscribe to the teaching of his master and himself.

Probably, too, an idea which has before suggested itself to us, may be fairly pertinent here: namely, that Lucretius expresses everything with extreme seriousness and intense conviction: his teaching is wholly wanting in the humour and lightness of touch which are so characteristic of Virgil: one is prepared to find him, even when dealing with the most trivial detail, with eyes firm-set and face of adamant: and, just as to a skilled observer, such a look affords strong indication of an overwrought mind, so there is a style which corresponds to such a look, a contemptuous and overbearing style, which may perhaps rightly be construed as an indication of mental unsoundness.

Inasmuch, however, as this tone affects the poem as a whole, it will be obvious that it cannot be conveniently evidenced by examples. Yet I should like to illustrate by quotation of a few lines, the arrogance with which Lucretius dismisses other men's speculations, more probable perhaps than his own:

7 9
299 108

Now since the Nature of the Mind and Soul
 Is fully found, and prov'd a part of th' whole,
 Let those that call it Harmony and please
 Their fancies to derive such words as these
 From Musick's sounds, or whence soe're it came,
 Apply'd to that which had no proper name,
 Take back their Term again; 'tis here o'erthrown,
 And useless prov'd : Let us go farther on.¹

And a few lines on, boasting his own views :

Now since the nature of the Mind is found
 So apt to move, of Bodies small and round
 It must be fram'd : which knowledge (lovely Youth)
 Will lead thee on to undiscover'd Truth.²

'He speaks with the confidence'—to borrow Cicero's words in an almost identical situation—'with the confidence
 693 peculiar to his sect, dreading nothing so much as to seem to doubt of anything, as if he had just descended from the Council of the Gods and Epicurus's intervals of worlds.'³

Thus much as to his style and tone of argument : next, I desire you to recall the subjects themselves to which (so at least it seems to me) Lucretius always turned with greatest pleasure. These were all things infinite and uncertain : whether in number, extent, motion, or dimension ; all that was without limit, indivisible, innumerable, just the qualities observed when men's minds tend to become unhinged. Almost invariably they are introspective, engrossed with themselves and their own secrets. Their vision is distorted and, one may say, contracted, unwontedly and unnaturally : to such degree, indeed, that their accustomed and native power is clearly lost. Undoubtedly the study of the more abstruse regions of philosophy, which we now call Metaphysics, and wherein Lucretius took

¹ Lucr. iii. 131 (Creech).

² Lucr. iii. 204 (Creech).

³ *De Nat. Deor.* i. 8.

special delight, always seems to have included an element not very much removed from a sort of insanity.

We come, then, to the conclusion that Lucretius' poem is not wholly free from symptoms of the malady under which Donatus and Eusebius record him to have laboured : to this extent at least, that his apparent irreligion would seem rather pitiable than reprehensible : and that readers' minds are touched with a certain tragic horror, which is not wholly displeasing. Indeed, if I may confess what I really feel, may there not be some ground for suspecting that those who are touched with madness have something in them, I do not say holy and prophetic (which the ancient Germans believed with regard to women), but yet something which implies the presence of a more than human power ? For all are agreed that they give utterance with their lips to feelings not their own : in fact, most men have ever believed that they are influenced by the Divine Power, or at least by some spirit. And perhaps this is ⁶⁹⁴ the reason why it was sometimes believed that there is a certain common tie between the insane and the company of prophets and poets : a link hard to explain or define, yet none the less real.

Nor must it be supposed that this view is wholly obsolete and superseded in our own times, now that the true heavenly light is diffused throughout the whole world. For, in the first place, it may fairly be argued, that the whole question as to the nature and causes of insanity is outside the province of religion. Divine Truth did not appear on the earth for the purpose of resolving difficult problems or to aid those who make a study of psychology and the theory of disease.

Besides, such hints as are found in Holy Scripture—for there are only incidental hints, no definite statements—would seem to support the popular belief, not to throw doubt upon it. How many accounts do we there read of

persons unhappily troubled by an evil spirit, or even by more than one ! and what is there stated as to the symptoms of these afflictions, clearly agrees with what we see nowadays in the case of maniacs and madmen. Will any one venture to guarantee that these are wholly free from the power of evil spirits ? these, I repeat, whom we meet with in our own times ? How much more credible then is it, that in those remote ages, while the truth was as yet unrevealed, that oracles may have been again and again promulgated by good or bad spirits, when they had once gained possession of some man of more than usually inspired genius, and with the gift of splendid expression, and yet not wholly master of himself ! and such a one was, in my judgement, Lucretius.

There was anciently a confirmed belief among those most deeply versed in sacred things, that the oracles and answers given forth from the most celebrated shrines, those of the Dodonian Jove, the Pythian Apollo, Trophonius, 695 Ammon, and others, were not unassisted by spiritual powers. Why, then, may we not suppose that philosophers and poets sometimes gave utterance to the decrees of a Spirit who inspired them ? especially such as bordered upon insanity.

Nor must it be supposed that nothing but what is base and impious could issue from such a source : for it seems with the Great and Good Ruler of all to have been almost a law, to emphasize and declare his own decrees by the testimony, willing or unwilling, of his enemies, whether men or evil spirits.

And any one to whom what has been here said does not seem wholly vain and beside the mark, will have no difficulty in comprehending how it happens that the poem of Lucretius is so toned and modified that, though he was of morbid mind, though an Epicurean and one who despised all Gods and religions, yet it is not merely excused but

even followed with a kind of genuine affection by good and true men : indeed, in his strain they recognize qualities which make it the best introduction to poems and prophecies which are truly divine. How this is mainly brought about I will endeavour, as best I can, to explain on another occasion. And with that our consideration of Lucretius, already too prolonged, will most fittingly conclude.

How Lucretius unconsciously serves the cause of Religion : first, because he again and again laments the vanity of life, even the life of ease and pleasure : and next, in that the consolations for it which he suggests are such as lead us in the direction of the truth : indeed he actually declares his longing for communion with the Deities : further, he grasps eagerly after things not present, complains of the inadequacy of language to express the truth, shows himself averse to trifling and levity : but, above all, because of that distinguishing passion visible throughout, not only for the Infinite and Profound, but for a certain secret and perfect Beauty.

IN our discussion as to the characteristic and central thought of the poetry of Lucretius it seemed to us, as you remember, that the chief interest which fascinated and possessed his mind was the love of things mysterious and infinite, or, as one may say, of the recesses and secrets of Nature. And then, after illustrating this peculiarity by quotations, we touched on a problem of great importance, considering how it was that the poet escapes the stigma of being shocking and repellent (to use Aristotle's phrase), although there runs through his whole poem, like a contaminating stain, the philosophy of those who, while acknowledging the Gods in word, make them in fact and truth of no account ; and the chief reason for this seemed to us to lie in the belief that the poet's impiety was not entirely his own fault, but arose from his disordered mind.

697 This led us to consider, briefly, the whole question of insanity : its effect in connexion with the poetic gift, and the special remedies and alleviations whereby it seeks refuge from its painful self-consciousness. And, finally, we found ourselves in some doubt whether certain qualities in Lucretius did not suggest the presence of a more than

human agency : a view which was entertained in former ages both with regard to insane persons, when they delivered themselves of utterances rather more methodical and rational than their wont, and also with regard to all writers of pagan literature and heathen philosophy. It was, in primitive times, fully believed that in both these orders of men there dwelt a certain secret power, whether from above or from below. But this idea once grasped, we may see how it might naturally modify and soften the verdict of those who otherwise would insist, on grounds of piety and religion, that Lucretius ought not to be so much as read. For it makes all the difference, I apprehend, whether we are dealing with the wanton and scoffing tongue and idle chatter of mere men, or with the utterance of a benevolent deity mysteriously showing us the true path of life by the voice and means of unconscious, or perhaps even hostile, witnesses.

But it must not be supposed that our opinion of Lucretius hangs entirely on considerations of this kind. Grant that our conjecture about the poet's madness, or at least that our theory of some tacit divine power uttering its oracles by the mouth of madmen, is baseless and futile ; dismiss from your minds both of these theories ; there will still remain the peculiar charm of the poem : just as in that region of science which has to do with the movements of the heavenly bodies, whatever theory is adopted as to their secret force and causes, or even if the question is left wholly in doubt, as it is by most men, yet it does not follow necessarily that all comprehension of universal beauty, all subtle feeling for natural things, are thereby excluded. So, perhaps, it may well happen that readers of Lucretius who find in his poem no trace of the alleged 698 mental disturbance, or hold that, even if existing, it cannot be attributed to some mysterious second sight or to the presence of some Divine power, are, nevertheless, led to

feel that the poet, all unknown to himself, wonderfully supports, indeed, communicates and commends to all who read him, the very religious sense which, in terms he seeks to abolish.

And, in truth, you will not easily find any one among the poets who lacked the enlightenment of revealed Truth, who affords so many splendid lines which, as it were spontaneously, cast their testimony in favour of sound and sincere piety. Not one of them has left more numerous passages which any one, perhaps changing here and there a word or two, but yet maintaining the general tenor of the whole, can quote on the side of goodness and righteousness. Such a method of quotation is technically called a 'parody' (*παρωδία*): but that word is generally used only of comic and humorous adaptations; and yet that it is of force even in grave subjects will be universally allowed, I apprehend, by all who read the poets, especially the ancient poets, with a little care. Let us test, therefore, by an instance or two, the extent to which the poem of Lucretius, all unknown to himself, and indeed contrary to his intent, yet in deed and truth serves the cause of religion. First, then, is it not clear that he lays the foundation for far higher things than his master Epicurus could conceive, when he deplores in such pathetic language and such mournful numbers the wretched and miserable lot of human life?

Did men perceive what 'tis disturbs their rest,
Whence rise their fears, and that their thoughtful
Breast

Is by the Mind's own natural weight oppress'd ;
Did they know this, as they all think they know,
They would not lead such lives as now they do ;
Not know their own desires, but seek to find
Strange places out, and leave this weight behind.¹

¹ *Lucr.* iii. 1066 (Creech).

It is true that almost all poets have expatiated on this theme. To sing in mournful strain of human life as being 699 transient and fragile as a flower, is a subject common to the noblest poets. But, unless I am mistaken, Lucretius has this special and almost unique characteristic, that he does not so much chafe at the brief and narrow bounds of our course on earth, as at the necessary conditions of life, even if lived under the best possibilities : he implies that life itself has been, and ever is, the most grievous of burdens to all men at all times. Remember, for instance, how utterly different from all this are the Elegiac lines of Moschus on the death of Bion, though certainly full of charm :

Though fade crisp anise, and the parsley's green,
And vivid mallows from the garden-scene ;
The balmy breath of spring their life renews,
And bids them flourish in their former hues !
But we, the great, the valiant, and the wise,
When once the seal of death hath clos'd our eyes,
Lost in the hollow tomb obscure and deep,
Slumber, to wake no more, one long unbroken sleep !¹

This poet complains of life's too rapid flight : that, the tomb once passed, there is no power of revisiting the light of day. He says not a word of the sadder fate that even in the midst of enjoyment men do not find life worth living.

Moreover, the poet discharges his function of lament in such wise that he seems, after all, to roam at ease and in peace through some pleasant region rich with fresh verdure : while Lucretius deals with the subject in language direct and unadorned, as men do who, when their heart is full, use every-day speech to express their feelings.

Now see how the passage continues in the same strain as before, and I would especially ask you to note how

¹ Moschus, *Idyll.* iii. 106 (Polwhele).

great is the effect produced by the restrained simplicity, by what the grammarians call the *Litotes*, of the diction :

One tir'd at home, forsakes his stately Seat,
 And seeks some melancholy close Retreat,
 But soon returns ; for prest beneath his load
 Of cares, he finds no more content abroad :
 Others, with full as eager haste, retire,
 As if their Father's house were all on fire,
 To their small Farm ; but yet scarce entred there,
 700 They grow uneasie with their usual care ;
 Or seeking to forget their grief, lie down
 To thoughtless Rest or else return to Town.¹

Assuredly this is in the tone of ordinary daily talk, and ' more fitted to the poet of comedy ' (to use Horace's phrase) : so truthful the action ; so heartfelt the words that burst from the breast. Sophocles' lines have somehow a loftier ring :

Happiest beyond compare
 Never to taste of life ;
 Happiest in order next,
 Being born, with quickest speed
 Thither again to turn
 From whence we came.
 When youth hath passed away
 With all its follies light,
 What sorrow is not there ?
 What trouble then is absent from our lot ?
 Murders, strifes, wars, and wrath and jealousy,
 And, closing life's long course, the last and worst,
 An age of weak caprice,
 Friendless, and hard of speech,
 Where, met in union strange,
 Dwell ills on ills.²

With him, you perceive, life is intolerable because of the restless play of Fortune and the ills that menace it from without ; while in Lucretius' view, on the other hand, it

¹ *Lucr.* iii. 1072 (Creech).

² *Oed. Col.* 1289 (1225) (Plumptre).

has nothing which can really tranquillize the soul, not even when passed in peace and quiet. More gently pathetic are Virgil's lines :

In youth alone, unhappy mortals live ;
But ah ! the mighty bliss is fugitive :
Discolour'd sickness, anxious labour, come,
And age, and death's inexorable doom.¹

Nothing could be more gracefully said : but they hardly approach the vivid directness of Lucretius. Virgil generalizes as a philosopher might : while, when we listen to Lucretius, the very facts of life stand before our eyes.

And finally, are we far from genuine religion when he thus proceeds to emphasize the causes of this terrible evil ?—

They all do strive to shun themselves ; in vain,
For troublesome he sticks close, the cares remain, 701
For they ne'er know the cause of all their pain :
Which if they did, how soon would all give o're
Their fruitless toys, and study Nature more ?
That is a noble search and worth our care ;
On that depends eternal Hope, or Fear ;
That teaches how to look beyond our Fate,
And fully shows us all our future state.²

Would not any one, I ask, almost be sworn that some advocate of a diviner philosophy speaks here ?

For in these lines he plainly implies that, wearied of this mortal life, he thirsts for immortality ; and those that follow evince a distaste even for that very pleasure so highly vaunted by his master Epicurus :

Our Life must once have end, in vain we flie
From following Fate ; e'en now, e'en now we die.
Life adds no new delights to those possest.
But since the absent pleasures seem the best,
With wing'd desire and haste we those pursue,

¹ *Georg.* iii. 66 (Dryden).

² *Lucr.* iii. 1081 (Creech).

But those enjoy'd, we streight-ways call for new.
 Life, Life we wish, still greedy to live on ;
 And yet what Fortune with the following Sun
 Will rise, what chance will bring, is all unknown.¹

Consider, too, those celebrated lines about the cries and wailings of new-born infants. Do they not declare more clearly than all that Plato or Pythagoras ever taught, that either our souls must be raised to better than mortal and earthly things, or we must utterly despair of a happy life ?—

A Man, when first he leaves his primitive Night,
 Breaks from his Mother's womb to view the Light,
 Like a poor carcass tumbled by the flood,
 He falls all naked, but besmear'd with blood,
 An Infant, weak and destitute of food :
 With tender cryes the pittyng Air he fills,
 A fit presage for all his coming Ills.²

Let me add, too, the passage where he represents Nature as rallying discontented human beings who spurn the good things they have :

Then why, fond Mortal, do'st thou ask for more,
 Why still desire t' increase thy wretched store,
 And wish for what must waste like those before ?
 Not rather free thyself from pains and fear,
 And end thy Life and necessary care ?
 Thy Pleasures always in a Circle run,
 The same returning with the yearly sun.³

702 And again in another place :

Lastly since Nature feeds with gay delight,
 And never fills the greedy Appetite ;
 Since every year, with the returning springs,
 She new delights, and joys, and pleasures brings :
 And yet our minds, amidst this mighty store,
 Are still unsatisfied, and wish for more :

¹ Lucr. iii. 1093 (Creech).

² Lucr. v. 222 (Creech).

³ Lucr. iii. 954 (Creech).

Sure this they mean, who teach that Maids below
Do idle pains and care and time bestow,
In pouring streams into a leaky Urn,
Which flow as fast again, as fast return.¹

True and heartfelt words these beyond question ! But, on the contrary, there is something plainly cold and perfunctory about what the poet has to say, elsewhere, by way of comfort. Only consider this oft-repeated formula after he has been levelling bitter reproaches against religions of all kinds or any kind :

These Fears, that darkness that o'erspreads our souls
Day can't disperse, but those Eternal rules
Which from firm Premises true Reason draws,
And a deep insight into Nature's laws.²

Magnificent promises these, leading us to expect great things : but now see what follows. He actually lays it down as being a safeguard against fear and error, when we once perceive and realize either that

Nothing was by the Gods of Nothing made ;³

or

First then, the Mind, in which the Reason lies,
Is part of Man, as Hands and Feet and eyes
Are parts of Animals ;⁴

or finally :

How Seed

Doth move to make, and to dissolve things made.
What drives them forward to their tedious race,
What makes them run thro' all the mighty space.⁵

Surely a magnificent source of solace to men's minds, when restless or despondent, to take a hand in a game played by formless molecules, and to get by heart the fine-spun theories of natural philosophers !

¹ Lucr. iii. 1016 (Creech).

² Lucr. i. 149 ; ii. 58 ; iii. 91 ; vi. 38 (Creech).

³ Lucr. i. 151 (Creech).

⁴ Lucr. iii. 94 (Creech).

⁵ Lucr. ii. 61 (Creech).

703 The result of all this is, that whenever Lucretius addresses himself to these attempts at consolation, his language all at once becomes perfunctory and ineffective : until he chances upon some reference to the familiar beauty of sky and earth which can be visibly seen. In short, he expatiates on the ills of life with keen ardour, but flags when he comes to their remedy. And how else could it be, seeing that the only expedient which occurred to him was to endeavour to remove heart-sickness by means of the idle theories of those who wrangle in the schools of philosophy, or rather in the laboratories of physical science ?

‘But,’ it may be objected, ‘there have always been some, and in our own time especially, the class is a fairly large one, who do not hesitate to support this view with all their might and main, as the phrase goes : the view, namely, that the whole hope and fortune of the race turns pre-eminently on successful study and inquiry concerning the movements of the stars, on precision of measurement, and on the discoveries of mathematicians and physicists.’ Be it so : but I should like to know this : whether those who laud these studies so zealously ever show the least sign that they are oppressed by the weariness of life, and have any deep sense of the suffering common to all humanity. Whence we conclude that their case is wholly different from that of Lucretius. They betray no trace of sickness of heart : there is no attempt in them to combine real sorrow with a remedy that proves most futile. Thus they, for their part, are at all events no bar to the correctness of the conclusion that Lucretius, in his own person, supplies strong evidence against himself and his own teaching. He plainly betrays that he is talking at random, that all his expedients are futile and only to be accepted because nothing better occurs to him. His tone is nearly always that of a man who fears he may be suspected of offering remedies worse than the disease itself.

And it seems pertinent in this connexion to cite the very last lines of the whole poem, which breaks off abruptly, as if the thread had been cut, in the middle of his account of the celebrated plague at Athens :

But as the state of Things would then permit,
Men burnt their Friends, nor lookt on just and fit :
And Want and Poverty did oft ingage
A thousand Acts of Violence and Rage. 704
Some (O imperious Want !) a carcass spoyl,
And burn their Friend upon another's Pile ;
And then would strive, and fight, and still defend,
And often rather die than leave their Friend ;
The Other lost his Pile by pious Theft,
A poor possession, all that Fate had left.¹

Surely a strange conclusion to a production of such ample scope, and so deeply concerned with the most crucial questions of philosophy and life ! Unless, indeed, which is credible enough, the author, tired of his own theme, was not even sufficiently in earnest to be at the pains of bringing an unsatisfactory and disappointing work to a worthy completion. For there is no real reason to suppose that he wrote more than has survived to our day : especially since he himself, towards the beginning of the Sixth Book, declares he is now 'hastening to the white boundary-line of the final goal'.²

We may now, then, take it for granted that Lucretius, when writing in such a sorrowful strain concerning the general hopes of mankind, and not merely of the vulgar herd but even of those who shared his own theories, was preparing the way in some fashion for true religion. Let me add now a point even more important : it is this, that he exhibits some indications, vague and obscure though they are, that his mind was really rising to higher things. I admit, however, that when he does so he seems more

¹ Lucr. vi. 1281 (Creech).

² Lucr. vi. 91 (Munro).

like a man feeling his way while asleep than like one who is wide awake and guided by a clear hope of reaching his goal. For, first, those Infinities, to which we have referred so often, and which do indeed contain the central feature of his poetry, are, as it were, the very traces (with all reverence be it spoken) of God Himself, impressed on the being and nature of man. For can any one believe that we should ever dream, either of the immense and limitless range of the heavens, or of light unspeakably pure, or, finally, of motion rapid beyond all calculation, were it not for some mysterious notion of divine greatness impressed on all men's minds? And so we may say confidently, that one who is much exercised with such thoughts as these is, though he knows it not, occupied in the quest of holiness and truth.

- 705 It is certainly striking how Lucretius' poem, again and again, rings of religion and goodness, especially when he seems to give himself full play in the wild speculations of his master. For instance, praising Epicurus, he writes as follows :

For when I hear thy mighty Reasons prove
This world was made without the powers above,
All fears and terrors waste, and fly apace.
Thro' parted Heavens I see the Mighty *Space*,
The Rise of Things, the Gods, and Happy seats. . . .
But that which senseless we so grossly fear,
No Hell, no sulphurous Lakes, no Pools appear ;
And thro' the Earth I can distinctly view
What underneath the busie Atoms do.¹

Thus he conceives his imagined void as the very abode and habitation of some vague Power, infinite and boundless.

And there is another passage, where he speaks of human life and the whole state of man in such fashion as to show

¹ Lucr. iii. 14 (Creech).

that he is, really and truly, trying to approach that very conception of Providence which he frequently denies with his lips :

And hence we fancy unseen Powers in Things,
Whose Force and Will such strange Confusion brings,
And spurns and overthrows our greatest Kings.¹

Moreover, he all but declares thunder and storms to be the work of some Divine Power :

Besides,
What Mind's unshaken, and what soul not aw'd,
And who not thinks the angry Gods abroad,
Whose limbs not shrink, when dreadful Thunder hurled
From broken clouds shakes the affrighted World ?
What, do not Cities, do not Nations fear,
And think their dismal dissolution near ?
Why, do not Tyrants then and Mighty Lords
Recall their wicked deeds and boasting words,
And fear that now Revenge is surely come ?
Do they not tremble at approaching Doom ? ²

And we must by no means omit here the splendid lines concerning the destined destruction of the world :

But now to prove all this : First cast an eye,
And look on all below, on all on high,
The solid earth, the seas and arched sky ;
One fatal hour (dear Youth) must ruine all,
This glorious Frame, that stood so long, must fall.³

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Nor without bearing on religion, truly, is the fact that he seeks wholly to withdraw and recall men's minds from the average round of life and from those pursuits which the generality hold in delight :

Blind, wretched Man ! In what dark paths of strife
We walk this little journey of our life ! ⁴

¹ Lucr. v. 1231 (Creech).

² Lucr. v. 1217 (Creech).

³ Lucr. v. 93 (Creech).

⁴ Lucr. ii. 14 (Creech).

And a few lines further on :

If then before such Martial shows as these,
Disperse not all black Jealousies and cares,
Vain dread of Death, and superstitious fears,
Nor leave thy mind : but if all this be vain,
If the same cares and dread and fears remain,
If Traytor-like they seize on e'en the Throne,
And dance within the circle of a crown ;
If noise of Arms, nor Darts can make them flie,
Nor the gay sparklings of the Purple Die ;
If they on Emperours will rudely seize ;
What makes us value all such things as these,
But folly and dark ignorance of Happiness ? ¹

Can we, on review, find a single moralist who insists more strongly upon plain living and contentment with a little ? ²

Moreover, again and again with a real delight he expresses a longing to look upon the blissful and serene aether :

The divinity of the gods is revealed and their tranquil abodes.

And in another verse, too, he marshals in array

Moon, day and night and night's austere constellations.³

Though why he should call the constellations *austere* (*severa*) I am at a loss to comprehend, unless he himself was wont to be awed by the sight of them as if in presence of some more than human Power.

And then compare the picture drawn by Lucretius, when
707 he celebrates rural quiet or philosophic calm and ease, with the blessings assured by the Divine Word to those who earnestly follow goodness and piety :

None planted fruitful Trees, none drest the Vine,
None prun'd decaying boughs, none prest the wine ;

¹ Lucr. ii. 46 (Creech).

² Cf. Cic. *De. Am.* xxiii. 86.

³ Lucr. v. 1189 (Munro).

Contented they with the poor easie store
 That Sun and Earth bestow'd, they wish no more.
 Soft Acorns were their first and chiefest food,
 And those red Apples that adorn the wood,
 And make pale Winter blush : such Nature bore
 More numerous then, beside a thousand more,
 Which all supply'd poor Man with ample store.¹

And as for Philosophy, let the oft-quoted lines suffice :

But above all 'tis pleasantest to get
 The top of high Philosophy, and sit
 On the calm, peaceful, flourishing head of it ;
 Whence we may view, deep, wondrous deep below,
 How poor mistaken Mortals wandering go,
 Seeking the path to Happiness.²

How little need be changed here to make this counsel in harmony with our own, the one true and holy discipline !

And, finally, I approach a consideration which has always seemed to me of the very greatest importance in this connexion. Although Lucretius, in strict argument, denies that anything human survives after death, yet he, too, recognizes, after his own fashion, assemblies of departed Heroes, and shades of the dead, whose vision and converse, he more than once implies, gave him, even in dream, unmeasured delight. Just observe the penalty which he threatens to any who fancy that the Gods are troubled about the fortunes of men :

If you refuse to flie
 Such thoughts, unworthy of the Deity ;
 But think they act such things as break their ease,
 And opposite to joy and happiness ;
 Then thou shalt surely smart, and fancying still
 The Gods are angry, fear a coming ill :
 Tho' no revengeful thoughts their Minds employ,
 No thirst to punish Man disturbs their joy ;
 Yet thou dost think their happy quiet Age
 Still vext with waking cares, and violent rage.

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¹ Lucr. v. 935 (Creech).

² Lucr. ii. 6 (Creech).

Nor shalt thou visit on the Sacred days
Their shrines with quiet mind, or sing their praise.
Besides, the Images, the Forms that rise
From their pure limbs, and strike thy Reason's eyes,
And constantly present the Deities,
Those Images will still disturb thy Mind,
Strike deep, and wound, and leave despair behind.¹

Plainly life is not really life unless men enjoy some communion or intercourse with the divine race of Heaven.

Further still, the very man who contemptuously dismisses the legends of Bacchus, Hercules, and the rest, does not hesitate to enroll his master Epicurus among the company of the immortal Deities :

Well then, that Man, who thus reform'd our Souls,
That slew these monsters, not by Arms but Rules,
Shall We, ungrateful We, not think a God ? ²

So we see that even the high priest of an impious creed cannot do without some object of worship, which, though far withdrawn from mortal eye, he may honour with reverent and loving regard.

We have now dealt with the substance of the poem, and found it such that we may venture almost exactly to reverse what was said about the teaching of Epicurus, and to say that Lucretius in words denies a Providence but in reality leaves it to us.

I now pass to the style and form of his argument, ways of thought, and expression. For, in this respect too, a man may evince clear proof of a mind really religious and devoted to the things which transcend humanity. From this point of view it is important to notice the skill which writers show in finding topics that suit them and bringing the truth out of unlikely places, if they can see anything anywhere that reminds them of that which they have at heart. And in this skill or faculty, Lucretius, by general consent,

¹ Lucr. vi. 67 (Creech).

² Lucr. v. 50 (Creech).

always shows himself pre-eminent. Even those who are little attracted by his poetry, as such, are wont to admire him for his ingenuity in pressing the most trifling and plainly fortuitous occasions to support his own philosophy 709 and glorify his master Epicurus. Take as an instance the passage where he finds an illustration of his primordial atoms, in the particles of dust floating in the sunlight :

For look where e're the glittering sun-beams come,
Thro' narrow chinks into a darkned room,
A thousand little bodies strait appear
In the small beams of light, and wander there ;
For ever fight, reject all shews of peace,
Now meet, now part again, and never cease.
Whence we may estimate how Atoms strove
Thro' the vast empty space, and how they move :
Such knowledge from mean Images we get,
And easily from small things rise to great.¹

And there are numbers of similar examples : no characteristic of Lucretius can be more widely illustrated. But this one is alone enough to evidence the man's wonderful instinct for detecting in the commonest daily experiences, points of resemblance to his cherished theories. Obviously, too, nothing is more useful in all religious appeal than such a faculty.

Upon the quality of his style I need not spend many words, since he is universally adjudged one to whom Horace's words may be applied :

And when the Subject's found, words freely flow.²

Doubtless, with all his wealth of language, his subtlety and charm, there is nevertheless mingled a certain simple directness, admirably suited to a writer who never once subordinates truth to eloquence. And can anything be suggested more thoroughly accordant with the bounden duty of those concerned with things immortal and divine ?

¹ Lucr. ii. 113 (Creech).

² Hor. *A. P.* 311 (Creech).

And here I will not shrink from expressing another thought which has occurred to me : trifling as it is, it is not perhaps wholly without its own importance. Lucretius more than once indicates that he chafes at the inadequacy of the Latin tongue : the 'poverty of our native speech', as he himself expresses it.¹ Now is not this very like the feeling which all have who argue about any grave and important subject : and especially about the deepest of all subjects, religion ? Do they not often reproach their lack of words, and show themselves solicitous lest blame may attach to their subject, when it is really due to their own inadequacy or that of their mother tongue ? And thus in this respect, too, we may detect some slight traces of a tone and temper which would eagerly seize upon and loyally hold the teaching of true piety, if once brought to its knowledge.

The same conclusion should be drawn, too, from that 'severity' once or twice previously referred to. For certainly, since nothing is so alien to laughter and jest as sacred religion, a writer who seems to utter every word earnestly and from his very soul, shows himself, so far, at all events, a religious and pious man.

Finally, the most weighty and prominent fact on this whole question will be found to be that the poet, even when he has occasion to argue his case most closely and to put things with unusual precision, indeed, almost with mathematical exactness, still associates with his scientific reasoning a sense of some profound depth spreading around us on all sides : we may be unable to fathom its deeps, yet we never readily surrender the hope that we may, some time or other, expatiate there in fullest freedom. Lucretius, if I rightly read him, betrays the existence of this deep-seated instinct, so closely bound up with religious feeling, even at the very time he is exultingly declaring

¹ i. 832.

that no region of all Nature remains untrodden by Epicurus :

‘ At all this a kind of godlike delight mixed with shuddering awe comes over me to think that Nature by thy power is laid visibly open, is thus unveiled on every side.’¹

And all the pageant goes ; whilst I, with awe,
See in its place the things my master saw ;

See in its place the three eternal things—
The only three—atoms and space and law.

All things but these arise and fail and fall,
From flowers to stars—the great things and the small ;

Whilst the great Sum of all things rests the same,
The all-creating, all-devouring All.²

Now what ground is there, I ask, for this ‘ shuddering 711 awe ’ or pious fear, which he declares to be bound up with the pleasure arising from the master’s doctrine, if it be not that our minds instinctively imagine for themselves some mysterious and infinite power existent everywhere and always ? But what else is this than, vaguely and implicitly, to acknowledge a Deity ? and such a Deity as is not wholly careless or unmindful of human affairs. Otherwise, I certainly fail to understand why any one should be troubled by fear, when the thought of that great Deep of Nature and of True Philosophy presses itself on his mind. For I do not see that anything of the kind affects those who in our own days consider themselves great and distinguished, because they, too, weigh and measure the nature of things after the principles of Epicurus. Not one of them, so far as I know, is filled with awe, not one of them gazes at sky, land, and sea, overwhelmed with pious terror : you would suppose that in all the vast range of the universe there was not even a nook or corner which they do not hope to penetrate, if only

¹ *Lucr.* iii. 28 (Munro).

² *Lucretius on Life and Death*, London, 1900; by kind permission of Mr. W. H. Mallock.

long enough life is granted them. And thus it follows that each of them just fails to reach the highest pleasure and the greatest distinction of which he is capable. For who that is genuinely human would not rather expatiate even in the first elements of a science which has infinite possibilities, than put the crowning touch, perfect as it might be, to one which is finite and narrow?

Surely it is true that in this respect, not even the abstruse art and science of mathematicians, still less of those who are concerned with natural philosophy and all the outward beauty of earth and sky, are lacking in a certain poetry of their own. Both include an element which can appeal with growing strength to their power of admiration, which can be pursued with eagerness and delight, and under whose influences the mind may surrender itself to be carried away and withdrawn into I know not what mysterious regions: mathematicians have their rational symmetry, as it is called, and their subtle schemes of numbers and magnitudes, endlessly branching out one upon another: natural philosophers, their vast wealth of comparisons, their oft-encountered tokens of latent and mysterious forces. Whosoever cultivates either of these
712 two fields in a reverent and sober spirit, finding an even greater pleasure in rapt contemplation than in mere discovery, possesses, I should say, a heart not ill prepared either for poetry or even for religion itself.

I hardly know whether it is justifiable to associate, with such important considerations as these, the exquisite clearness of Lucretius' style, which, like a clear atmosphere, makes all his theories stand out in such clear sequence and proportion. It is very difficult to offer examples of this quality, since its peculiar power consists less in illuminating particular passages than in its power of filling the whole with a brilliant and steady light. We may say, indeed, that this faculty much resembles the

cunning art of Nature herself, whenever she is pleased to fashion anything with an unwonted grace : a leaf, say, of some delicately framed plant, or the just harmony of sounds : any one who lovingly ponders such things as these will assuredly at times be wellnigh rapt beyond himself by the simple sense of their absolute beauty. How much the more likely, then, that Lucretius himself, instructed in these splendours by long experience, should revel in a certain secret sense of Nature's loftier ranges whensoever he shadows forth some picture with peculiar felicity !

Perhaps, however, this prologue may indicate this unique power :

For first I teach Great Things in lofty strains,
And loose men from Religion's grievous chains.
Next, tho' my subject's dark, my verse is clear,
And sweet, with Fancy flowing everywhere :
And this design'd.¹

And we may add the following lines, which he more than once introduces :

In few, but sweetest Numbers, Muse rehearse :
My few shall far exceed more numerous verse.
Thus dying swan's, tho' short, yet tuneful voice
Is more delightful than a World of Noise.²

Can any one suppose that Lucretius, being the man he was, merely indulges himself in vain conceit ? do we not, 713 rather, freely excuse him for praising his own work somewhat unstintedly, in that it suggests the high secrets of Nature ?

To resume then, briefly, what has been said in the present discourse. Since we have established that Lucretius, first in his subject, next in his way of treating and discussing it, sought out, for himself, with special pleasure all that is mysterious and abstruse, all that is immense, all that is untrammelled by bounds (a characteristic which

¹ *Lucr. i. 930* (Creech).

² *Lucr. iv. 181 ; 907* (Creech).

itself, beyond all others, lifts the mind from the common and ordinary routine of life): further, seeing that he everywhere seeks comparisons which, by their vastness or elegant beauty, carry the suggestion of Deity: and gives fullest expression to those great scientific and mathematical conceptions which ever lift the mind to the heights and mysteries of far-reaching space: seeing all this, it need not surprise us that he affords more lines than the whole circle of ancient poets capable of being applied to ends and offices truly divine. And so, Epicurean though he was, and forbidden by his school's decree to worship Deity with fear and reverence, he betook himself as by natural instinct to the far-withdrawn deeps of Nature and mysterious theories concerning infinite things. From such material he shaped for himself, so far as he could, a religion. For, not daring to enter the inmost shrine, he wandered, one may say, near the doors and thresholds with sadness and longing desire:

And stretches out his helpless hands
In yearning for the further shore.¹

And finally (if such imagination may be forgiven), the Great and Good God ordained him to be a shining witness, in what high and special reverence we should hold both all the form and feature of the world around us, and that region of Poetry, in particular, which is most deeply concerned with them. In truth, I firmly believe that all these were granted as a solace to sorrowing mortals till such time as true Religion should be revealed, and that minds which have been imbued with divine truth should still look on them as a valuable means, for they are fraught with the sense of piety, are a refuge for a full heart, and, for thankful, chastened spirits, a marvellous linking with that glorious region of the blest.

¹ *Aen.* vi. 314 (Conington).

Virgil, on his own confession, looked up to Lucretius as a master. He is to be ranked among the poets who delight in country life, not in action. It is clear that he wrote the Aeneid somewhat against the grain : for, first, he is quite uninterested in the character of Aeneas himself : next, he gladly catches at every opportunity of digressing into the quiet charms of Nature : finally, he makes it clear that he thoroughly detested war and warlike affairs.

NEXT to Lucretius, we have to address ourselves to the poetry of Virgil : the fact, indeed, speaks for itself : first of all, because they are so intimately connected as to time and place. We cannot easily believe that distinguished poets appeared independently of a kind of natural sequence and defined law, if only we can, even to a slight extent, conjecture what the law is. Can we really believe that the issue of wars, the fate and fortune of kings and princes, are under governance of method and order, but that no rational association is traceable between those great men who by their genius and writings have proved a blessing not only to their own age, but to all that follow ? Surely, a hard and scarcely human view ! and if we refuse to accept it, then it follows at once that we cannot find any more suitable thread on which to string together the various changes and advances in the history of Poetry than the simple order of time. This is precisely the rule we have ⁷¹⁶ adhered to in our attempt to deal with ancient poetry ; whether quite successfully I know not : but at all events, to my mind, each order of poetry seems, in its own time and place, to accord most appropriately with human needs and human desires : I mean that of Homer, of Pindar, of Aeschylus, and of Lucretius, provided that I have not

entirely failed to grasp the essential quality and main principle of each.

And so, in my opinion, we must proceed by the same path in our remarks upon Virgil : particularly as he himself not doubtfully implies that he always had Lucretius before his eyes, though he would not venture to imitate him and did not consider himself as working in the same field. In support of this, one passage already cited, towards the close of the second *Georgic*, will suffice : the passage in which he declares that the chief reason why he wishes to win the favour of the Muses is that he may be taught Nature's secrets :

Teach me the various labours of the moon,
And whence proceed th' eclipses of the sun ;
Why flowing tides prevail upon the main,
And in what dark recess they shrink again ;
What shakes the solid earth ; what cause delays
The summer nights, and shortens winter days.¹

And a few lines later he styles ' happy '—

The man, who, studying Nature's laws,
Through known effects can trace the secret cause—
His mind possessing in a quiet state,
Fearless of Fortune, and resign'd to Fate !

Here we have an undisguised tribute to the Epicurean poet : what his view may have been concerning Epicurus himself and his teaching, he has, unless I am mistaken, left uncertain. Probably the song of Silenus has a similar reference :

He sung the secret seeds of Nature's frame ;
How seas, and earth, and air, and active flame,
Fell through the mighty void, and, in their fall,
Were blindly gather'd in this goodly ball.²

717 A strange subject, one would think, for a poem, had

¹ *Georg.* ii. 478 (Dryden).

² *Ecl.* vi. 31 (Dryden).

not a recent splendid example been already at hand in the poem of Lucretius.

The verses which follow again recall Lucretius, where, towards the beginning of his Fifth Book he describes the wild solitude of primitive man and of the desert world :

The rising trees the lofty mountains grace :
The lofty mountains feed the savage race,
Yet few and strangers, in th' unpeopled place.

Moreover, I fancy that there is an underlying tribute to the *De Rerum Natura*, when Virgil pictures Iopas with harp and song gracing the royal banquet :

Iopas brought
His golden lyre, and sung what ancient Atlas taught—
The various labours of the wandering moon,
And whence proceed th' eclipses of the sun ;
Th' original of men and beasts ; and whence
The rains arise, and fires their warmth dispense,
And fixed and erring stars dispose their influence.¹

And then he adds what he had already said in the *Georgics*, and in exactly the same words—

What cause delays
The summer nights, and shortens winter days—

lest there should be any room for doubt that he has in mind the same order of poetry in both cases.

And thus we come to the conclusion that in Virgil's own opinion there subsisted between Lucretius and himself a certain fellow feeling, not superficial or accidental, but deeply seated and engrained in both their hearts : and that he therefore is far more justly reckoned among Pastoral than among Epic poets : consequently, that his special gift and vein are to be sought less in the *Aeneid* than in the poems produced when he was younger and lived and sung as he himself willed.

¹ *Aen.* i. 740 (Dryden).

But why spend time on this? If there is any point on which we may dispense with long argument, it is this about Virgil. No one need proceed here cautiously, with hesitating step, as in dark and difficult paths; no need of subtle conjecture and the keen-scented instinct of a patient and acute investigator. Even if it were true that the fact
 718 does not force itself on the reader's eye: even if a doubt can be raised whether any other note is struck more often in his poems than the praise of country and nature: we have, after all, the poet's own direct and unconcealed testimony concerning himself and his true temperament, in those lines, which have already been quoted more than once, and of which this is the sum:

My next desire is, void of care and strife,
 To lead a soft, secure, inglorious life—
 A country cottage near a crystal flood,
 A winding valley, and a lofty wood.¹

In these verses, I say, the poet declares in a way from which there is no appeal, what is the goal of his ambition, and what the part he conceives himself to play in the sacred ring and company of the Muses. The significance in a matter concerning poetry of a declaration so expressed is exactly the same as often happens in the deeper matters of religion where a man prefers to utter his feelings in some fixed form of words.

In these lines, indeed, written when riper both in years and literary experience, he would seem to have pronounced judgement upon himself, in a spirit of detachment, as if looking down upon himself from above: but such was his prevision, he had foreshadowed the same opinion when he first produced the *Bucolics*:

But when I try'd her tender voice, too young,
 And fighting kings and bloody battles sung,
 Apollo check'd my pride, and bade me feed
 My fatt'ning flocks, nor dare beyond the reed.²

¹ *Georg.* ii. 485 (Dryden).

² *Ecl.* vi. 2 (Dryden).

It will be remembered perhaps that a certain Varus, a man of high rank, had urged the poet to forsake poetry of rural life and quiet, and rather devote himself to writing some work in the Homeric vein. Some such meaning, I take it, is implied in the lines which immediately follow :

Admonish'd thus, while every pen prepares
To write thy praises, Varus, and thy wars,
My past'ral Muse her humble tribute brings ;
And yet not wholly uninspir'd she sings.

Ecl. VI. 6-7

In fact, Virgil lightly replies to such exhortations, that at one time in his early life warlike themes had exercised his mind and ambition, but that he obeyed the plain ⁷¹⁹ warnings of his better judgement, and did not attempt a task for which he was little fitted, but had betaken himself willingly and gladly to his rural haunts as to a harbour of refuge.

Moreover, it should be noted that the poet in this Eclogue presents himself under the name of Tityrus : whence we may infer that the several views and opinions which are fathered upon the same character in other Eclogues may all be fairly taken as those of Virgil himself. The importance of this fact in connexion with the present discussion will appear later. Here, I will note a different point, that Virgil, while frequently professing himself as a follower of some one or other of his predecessors, yet never, so far as I know, suggests that he modelled himself after Homer. As regards the pastoral poems, he claims Theocritus as his master :

I first transferr'd to Rome Sicilian strains ;
Nor blush'd the Doric Muse to dwell on Mantuan
 plains.¹ *my Roman* *Doric*

Sicilian Muse, begin a loftier strain !²

I will go : and the lays that in Chalcidian verse I have
composed will attune upon the pipe of the Sicilian swain.³

¹ *Ecl. vi. 1.*

² *Ecl. iv. 1.*

³ *Ecl. x. 50.*

Thy sacred succour, Arethusa,¹ bring,
To crown my labour ('tis the last I sing).²

And I might cite other passages, wherein, as if going out of his way, and indeed with a sort of delight, he insists that he is a follower of the Sicilian muse and the School of Theocritus. And so, too, when he comes to compose the *Georgics*, this most circumspect of poets does not hesitate to take up Hesiod's mantle :

And old Ascræan verse in Roman cities sing.³

And yet, throughout the whole length of the *Aeneid*, though he not only diligently imitates, but even translates Homer, we never once find him naming that great father and creator of poetry : one might almost say some religious scruple forbade it. In truth, as we should expect from his simple and transparent character, he shrunk from appearing to claim even the very last place in the circle of Epic poets : being, very rightly, conscious that in this sphere he was exerting himself, I will not say in defiance of his genius, but yet in a way that ran counter to his natural instincts, which turned naturally to other themes. Moreover, Virgil was, in my opinion, a critic of unrivalled judgment, gifted with a most delicate and exquisite literary instinct : so that we are the more inclined to fall in with his own verdict as to himself. Then, too, do not his contemporaries seem to have felt precisely the same thing ? At all events, a celebrated antithesis in one of Horace's satires thus contrasts him with Varius :

Varius outsoars us all on Homer's wings :
The Muse that loves the woodland and the farm
To Virgil lends her gayest, tenderest charm.⁴

Observe that Horace not merely assigns to Virgil, then

¹ Addressed here as the nymph of the Syracusan fountain, with reference to Theocritus.

² *Ecl.* x. 1.

³ *Georg.* ii. 176 (Dryden).

⁴ *Sat.* i. x. 43 (Conington).

a new poet, as his special domain, the country-side and the delights of natural things, but also, at least as compared with the gifts of Varius, then at the height of his popularity, denies him an active and heroic vein.

It would, assuredly, be arrogant and foolish to throw doubt and uncertainty on the clearly expressed judgement of these two distinguished poets, one of whom, moreover, was speaking of himself and the other of his intimate friend.

Now, having once established this principle, we may well dispense with any further inquiry as to the main essence of Virgil's poetry, and pass on to other subjects which will prove highly interesting, be of richer fruitfulness, and capable of more definite decision : namely, how it has come about that this one poet stands out beyond all others as the type and model of his own peculiar class : what temper of mind, what worldly fortunes, and, more than all, what philosophic creed, severally contributed to develop him and make him the most delightful priest and interpreter of Nature.

Yet it may still be urged that most critics have always relegated Virgil to a totally different poetic class. They are wont to be extraordinarily impressed by the mere form, 721 appearance, and name of an Epic. As soon as they read of heroes, wars, a burning city, household gods carried away in flight, fate leading the fugitives to Italy, the conquest of that country by war, and all the rest which goes to make up the apparatus of a poem in the great style, forthwith they proceed to imagine for themselves another Homer. Nor can they easily be led to believe it possible, that in the midst of all this martial and civil turmoil, a passionate love for rural peace should both live and flourish, and indeed be subtly intermingled with war-like strains : and this in such a way that in dealing with almost exactly the same themes we find two poets,

yes, and both primary poets, belonging to two opposite classes.

257.160
1.200
Nor are there wanting some plausible grounds which may be urged in support of their opinion. I pass by the fact that certain particular episodes in the *Aeneid* present almost an exact copy of particular parts of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*—since the school and quality of a writer are not to be assigned merely by the fact that he imitates another, but much more by the way and spirit in which he imitates him: yet, leaving all this out of the question, who will deny that Virgil duly decks and sets off both naval and martial descriptions, with most forceful diction, with wealth of imagery, and with appropriate rhythm, now smooth, now animated, as occasion demanded? and all of this is suggestive of a writer ranging over his own true field, not struggling and making head against his natural bent. Let us take by way of example the first lines that meet us on turning over the leaves:

And now the trumpets terribly, from far,
With rattling clangor, rouse the sleepy war.
The soldiers' shouts succeed the brazen sounds;
And heav'n, from pole to pole, the noise rebounds.
The Volscians bear their shields upon their head,
And, rushing forward, form a moving shed.
These fill the ditch; those pull the bulwarks down:
Some raise the ladders; others scale the town.
But, where void spaces on the walls appear,
Or thin defence, they pour their forces there.
With poles and missive weapons, from afar,
The Trojans keep aloof the rising war.¹

722 Could Homer, it is asked, or even the warlike Tyrtaeus himself, exhibit greater eagerness and enthusiasm in the midst of carnage and tumult? And indeed that is true: for I quite believe, whatever his theme, Virgil was never wanting either in that unfettered rush and resonance of

¹ *Aen.* ix. 503 (Dryden).

language or poetic 'vividness', which always brings the whole scene visibly before us. He was a most consummate artist, and so habituated in all that sort of machinery and apparatus that he could not, I apprehend, easily relinquish it even in the most trivial description; still less when engaged on a theme, undertaken (so we are told) at the instance of Augustus, upon which he lavished all his art and devotion. So, too, in our own times great poets have sung on any trifling subject which came their way: one on a fly snared in a spider's web;¹ another on a stolen tress of a lady's hair;² a third, as it happened, on some other chance text: nor did they stint a jot of their accustomed grace and genius in dealing with it; and yet no one would ever dream of supposing they attached any grave importance to such things, or that therein lay the essence of their poetry. It is a mistake, therefore, to assume that a poet's real quality and disposition can be inferred unmistakably, either from the magnificent roll of the words or the splendour of the imagery.

Let us rather direct our attention to such characteristics as appeal, not to the eye and ear, but to the intellect. Now an epic, like a drama, may be fairly tested in the personages who play the leading parts; and when we find that nearly all that concerns some chief actor seems to be coldly and perfunctorily conceived, it is hard to believe that the task in hand was heartily congenial to the composer: nor, as Horace jestingly declares of himself, that he took it seriously in hand because unable to sleep till he had delivered his soul.³

You see the point at which I am aiming: you scarcely need that I should point out to you how widely the two 723 chief ancient epic poets differ in this respect. In the *Iliad* everything is redolent of Achilles: not merely of any typical warrior, but of Achilles, brilliant in his own special

¹ Spenser, *Muioptomos*.

² Pope, *Rape of the Lock*.

³ *Ep.* ii. 2. 54.

and peculiar radiance, as the poet himself conceived him : the Achilles who, when hardly more than a boy, knowingly and willingly dedicated himself to death rather than lose complete and perfect renown, and upon whom, therefore, not merely his own comrades, not merely mortal men, but even the assemblies of the immortal Gods, and the world of dumb animals, lavished their favouring regard. Upon this one man hangs the fate and fortune of all Asia and of Greece : while he is wrathful, the downfall of Troy is delayed : when he is pacified, all goes forward apace : when off the stage, we long for him to reappear : we silently test by his standard all other men, the moment they come forward. Finally, no one could possibly doubt for a moment that the poet himself held Achilles in highest regard : while on the contrary, as to Virgil's opinion of Aeneas, judgement is neither easy nor decisive. He calls him ' Pious ' and ' Father ', indeed, with scrupulous care : brings him on the scene with much grandeur of phrase and pomp of imagery : indeed, represents Heaven and Earth, the universal quire of Nature, and Gods above and spirits below as alike in sympathy with him. Yet at every moment we seem in presence of laboured and conscientious effort : everything seems the outcome of a duty and a task rather than the spontaneous flow and impulse of the poet's inmost heart.

The *Aeneid*, moreover, is marked by the serious blemish, that not even at the very end of the whole poem does it leave us with any defined and clearly-drawn portrait of the man who plays the chief part in it. What impression others derive, indeed, I know not : but to myself, at all events, going back on Aeneas' character, no absolute personality emerges which can be said to be drawn and sketched even in barest outline. I find myself wholly
724 unable to infer what, under any given circumstance, this hero would either say or do : so that at times I am almost

driven to conclude that Virgil hardly troubled himself to think out and conceive the qualities and disposition of his own Aeneas at all : he seems to have treated him as nothing more than the shadow of a glorious name on which might be hung all that the earliest traditions had handed down concerning the early history of the Romans and the Julian race. And so it comes about that the Trojan hero speaks and acts all through much after the fashion of those who have taken up a part, whether in politics or in any other form of human co-operation, and feel bound to maintain it at all costs. Such a man is never independent, never wholly a free agent. No ' words of truth are forced out from the bottom of his heart '.¹ And, just as in the ordinary intercourse of life men of this kind present but small attraction, so, I apprehend, the character of Aeneas leaves most readers cold.

More than this, may we not even affirm that on certain occasions the poet himself spontaneously visits his hero with highest reprobation and resentment? In fact, all that relates to Dido admits of no other construction. For the episode is so conceived that it would manifestly seem a shameful and repulsive case of injustice should Aeneas go scot-free. And therefore Virgil, now and again, deliberately seeks to reassure us with the happy prediction of some ultimate retribution :

If so the Fates ordain, and Jove commands,
Th' ungrateful wretch shou'd find the Latian lands,
Yet let a race untam'd, and haughty foes,
His peaceful entrance with dire arms oppose ;
Oppress'd with numbers in th' unequal field,
His men discourag'd and himself expell'd,
Let him for succour sue from place to place,
Torn from his subjects, and his son's embrace :
First let him see his friends in battle slain,
And their untimely fate lament in vain :

¹ Lucr. iii. 58.

And when, at length, the cruel war shall cease,
 On hard conditions may he buy his peace;
 Nor let him then enjoy supreme command,
 But fall, untimely, by some hostile hand,
 And lie unbury'd on the barren sand!
 These are my pray'rs, and this my dying will.¹

A divinely inspired utterance truly, since 'truth sits
 725 upon the lips of dying men': and wholly acceptable to
 all who demand the punishment of a perjured oath. More-
 over, it may fairly be suggested that the same instinctive
 feeling is traceable in the memorable colloquy with the
 shade of Dido when Aeneas passes through the Lower
 World; if indeed we may call it a colloquy, for, following
 the hero's humble greeting and unmistakable betrayal of
 an uneasy conscience, we read:

Disdainfully she look'd; then turning round,
 She fix'd her eyes unmov'd upon the ground,
 And, what he says and swears, regards no more,
 Than the deaf rocks, when the loud billows roar;
 But whirl'd away, to shun his hateful sight,
 Hid in the forest, and the shades of night.
 Then sought Sichaeus thro' the shady grove,
 Who answer'd all her cares, and equall'd all her love.
 Some pious tears the pitying hero paid,
 And followed with his eyes the flitting shade.²

This sounds somehow more humiliating treatment than
 consists with the proper dignity of a brave and good man,
 to say nothing of the pioneer and founder of the Roman
 name. Virgil, I apprehend, inclined (whether instinctively
 or of set purpose who can say?) to represent Aeneas as
 utterly cast down and ashamed: but how solemn a truth,
 how calculated to fill the sinner with remorse, that there
 should be no forgiveness even in the shades below!

Let us, however, pass on into Latium with the Trojans:
 for there, too, the poet shows himself somewhat harsh to

¹ *Aen.* iv. 612 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* vi. 469 (Dryden).

imitation
 of
 treatment of
 heroes

we may compare Turnus in Venusberg
 Aeneas : since he endows Turnus, his rival, not only with
 a natural and single-hearted character, but also with that
 which is more attractive still, an unaffected and youthful
 enthusiasm : moreover, he clearly implies that he won the
 love of Lavinia herself : and, most important of all, gives
 him a just and righteous ground for hostilities : so just
 and righteous indeed that any one opposing it must inevit-
 ably plead the manifest and direct command of God—that
 customary cloak of fraud throughout the *Aeneid*.

In short, let any one compare the death of Hector at
 the hands of Achilles with that of Turnus at the hands of 726
 Aeneas, and all that is said about each before or after his
 death, and he will, I apprehend, feel instinctively how wide
 is the gulf between the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. With all our
 compassion for Hector, yet we feel no resentment that he
 should fall before an Achilles, a man to whom Destiny has
 given his power and who is more like a God than a man ;
 but we feel nothing but sorrow as Turnus falls, shamefully
 cut off as he was by one who utterly fails to captivate us
 by the least brilliance of personality. And here, too, I feel,
 as I have pointed out before, that Homer skilfully tempers
 and softens the effect of a savage and cruel deed. For
 by addition of two episodes he has deliberately carried on
 the story somewhat further than is consistent with the
 well-known rule of Aristotle : the first describes the funeral
 rites of Patroclus, the other the meeting of Priam and
 Achilles : and thus the savage temper of Achilles is softened
 in two ways : we are made to see that it was passionate
 loyalty to his dead comrade which at the outset kindled
 his fury, yet that at the end, when once he has given
 satisfaction to the spirit of the Dead, his anger gives way
 to compassion. But however highly Virgil's artistic judge-
 ment may be applauded in rounding off his whole poem
 with the death of Turnus, I greatly suspect that this
 circumstance has tended in no small degree to discredit

*Turnus
 the Italian
 Aeneas the
 wanderer*

Aeneas. The last act in any history has vast influence on our sympathies one way or another : and few indeed will follow Aeneas, when he finally leaves the stage after such an event as this, with good wishes and happy augury.

Dismissing, however, what specially concerns Aeneas, I fail to recognize, either in his character, in that of Turnus, or in any single one of all those whom Virgil brings upon his stage, the quality so conspicuous in Homer : namely, that the issue and essence of each deed wholly depend on the conduct and temper of the actors. What is called the knot, or critical point, of the *Iliad* consists, as we know, solely in the wrath of the two leading heroes : but, as for the *Aeneid*, I doubt if any single part of it would need
727 alteration, if the characters of the actors were altered. In the *Iliad* the issues not only of the whole war, but even, one might almost say, of individual combats, admirably bear witness to the character of each combatant : and not only those of the first rank, but those of secondary and third-rate importance. Virgil, I will not deny, diversifies the fortunes and hazards of his characters with consummate skill and care : yet it is only done either by relieving the strain upon us with the help of similes drawn from more peaceful scenes, or by touching the chord of sympathy for
1 the sad lot of humankind : on the individualities of the
2 warriors themselves, he either bestows little trouble, or at all events produces no happy result : one or two instances to the contrary alone excepted.

In the next place, let us ask this : is there any one character in the *Aeneid*, with the solitary exception perhaps of Turnus, whom we are wont to recall with silent affection, and of whom we can create any clear picture in our minds ? does the poem afford any human portraits such as readily come to mind to help us when we are oppressed with affairs and the daily tenor of life ? Whereas in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* each man's quality is vividly

Dido?
p 383

expressed, not merely 'the chosen chieftains of the Danaï foremost of men',¹ but even some obscure Cebriones and Automedon and Euryclea and many more who play even for a moment some most insignificant parts.

Nor in passing this judgement do I forget Euryalus and Nisus, nor Pallas and Evander, nor Dido, that most pathetic figure of all, nor any other character like these which we find in Virgil. But this is my deliberate opinion: Virgil's men and women, as a rule, excite and touch our minds, not so much for their own sakes as on account of their fates and fortunes: they seem cast in a mould which belongs rather to a general class, as logicians call it: while Homer's characters, even to minutest detail, are so hit off that each of them exhibits characteristic and peculiar individuality: it is never, for example, merely some wanton youth, nor modest matron, nor kingly old man who appears, but a living person, Paris, Andromache, or Priam. 728

Homer's surpassing merit and highest charm lie in the personality of his heroes and in dramatic action. It is true that he treats of the whole field of country life and of Nature, and that with abundant variety, but it is always with intent to illustrate the parts played by his characters and the scheme of the action. Virgil, on the other hand, only seems really happy in his theme when its scene lies in some lovely spot. Homer describes stream and forest in their relation to human life; Virgil, the fortunes and ways of men, for the sake of stream and wood. The name of Homer immediately summons to imagination not Xanthus and Simois nor the Trojan shore, but the warriors themselves, Achilles, Hector, and the rest. Those, on the other hand, who revel in Virgilian memories, will instinctively revert to some coast or river, some delightful or sacred spot which he has pictured in association with his heroes. And this view has the support, I think, of the

¹ Lucr. i. 87.

refined judgement of painters and artists. Those who take subjects out of Homer depict, as a rule, kings, battles, and noble dames ; while those inspired by Virgil paint country scenes, mountain passes, water-ways, cloudland splendours, and whatsoever belongs to Nature's quiet charm. Is there, or could there be, throughout the whole *Aeneid* any more impressive incident than the first approach of Aeneas and his Trojans to the Latin shore ? or any situation affording finer scope for a poet who aimed at depicting the deeds of kings and chiefs, whether by pencil or brush ? Yet Claude Lorraine, a skilled and learned painter assuredly, in his representation of it, elected, you will remember, to expend his whole pains on the charms of the delicious
 729 scenery. Nor has he wronged Virgil by such treatment, for it is clear that nothing lay so near the heart of the poet himself. Just listen, if quotation of such well-known lines may be forgiven me :

Now, when the rosy morn began to rise,
 And wav'd her saffron streamer through the skies,
 When Thetis blush'd in purple, not her own,
 And from her face the breathing winds were blown,
 A sudden silence sate upon the sea,
 And sweeping oars, with struggling, urge their way.

The Trojan, from the main, beheld a wood,
 Which thick with shades, and a brown horror stood :
 Betwixt the trees the Tyber took his course,
 With whirlpools dimpled : and with downward force
 That drove the sand along, he took his way,
 And roll'd his yellow billows to the sea.
 About him, and above, and round the wood,
 The birds that haunt the borders of his flood,
 That bath'd within, or bask'd upon his side,
 To tuneful songs their narrow throats apply'd.
 The captain gives command : the joyful train
 Glide through the gloomy shade, and leave the main.¹

Obviously the poet is completely charmed and carried

¹ *Aen.* vii. 25 (Dryden).

away by the lovely banks of the river, by the windings of the forest, and by the cries of the sea-birds, whose song, though not pleasing in itself, yet is by no means without its own attraction as closely associated with memories of beautiful regions : so that we need not be surprised at Virgil's phrase that ' the air is charmed ' by it. But the poet, I repeat, is fascinated by these delights : for the moment he forgets war and policy and the Rome that was so soon to be : so greatly does he revel in the loneliness of grove and sea and stream.

And before long he again takes up the same strain, when Aeneas approaches the Arcadian colony : joyfully and thankfully the poet escapes from the strife of camps to the banks and deeps of the silent stream. An embassy is on its way to Evander :

The following night, and the succeeding day,
 Propitious Tyber smooth'd his wat'ry way :
 He roll'd his river back, and pois'd he stood,
 A gentle swelling, and a peaceful flood.
 The Trojans mount their ships : they put from shore,
 Borne on the waves, and scarcely dip an oar,
 Shouts from the land give omen to their course ; 730
 And the pitch'd vessels glide with easy force.
 The woods and waters wonder at the gleam
 Of shields and painted ships that stem the stream.
 One summer's night and one whole day they pass
 Betwixt the green-wood shades, and cut the liquid
 glass.¹

Surely any one may see that Virgil does not merely touch these summer delights in passing, but lingers lovingly over them, and is unwillingly recalled to war and state affairs.

Such verses as these have, moreover, the distinguishing quality that each detail is beautiful in itself, and all combine to form one beautiful whole. Those are mistaken, therefore, who deny this power of painting scenes from

¹ *Aen.* viii. 86 (Dryden).

nature to the ancients. Without looking further afield, a fine example is furnished by the exordium which prefaces the account of the approach to the Latian shore :

And thou, O matron of immortal fame !
Here dying, to the shore hast left thy name :
Caieta still the place is called from thee,
The nurse of great Aeneas' infancy.
Here rest thy bones in rich Hesperia's plains :
Thy name ('tis all a ghost can have) remains.

Now, when the prince her fun'ral rites had paid,
He plough'd the Tyrrhene seas with sails display'd.
From land a gentle breeze arose by night ;
Serenely shone the stars ; the moon was bright ;
And the sea trembled with her silver light.
Now near the shelves of Circe's shores they run
(Circe the rich, the daughter of the sun),
A dang'rous coast !—The goddess wastes her days
In joyous songs : the rocks resound her lays.
In spinning, or the loom, she spends the night ;
And cedar brands supply her father's light.¹

What one element, I would ask, of a delightful and perfect picture is here wanting ? Seen from afar, there is the funeral mound on the shore ! we see the vessels, on the one hand, borne along the night-shadowed tranquil deep ! and the full radiance of the moon shines down on it all ! on the other there are the steep rocks, the pathless wood, the smoke rising from the palace summit. And I rather fancy these two books are more than ordinarily rich in such pictures : the poet, perhaps, feeling the near approach of battle array and arms and the hideous tumult of war : and so lingering the more affectionately in some peaceful nook. Thus on the very eve of combat :

The cheerful morn salutes Evander's eyes,
And songs of chirping birds invite to rise.²

Or again, when Vulcan rouses himself to make armour, the hour is thus charmingly marked :

¹ *Aen.* vii. 1 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* viii. 455 (Dryden).

Now when the Night her middle course had rode,
 And his first slumber had refresh'd the god—
 The time when early housewives leave the bed,
 When living embers on the hearth they spread,
 Supply the lamp, and call the maids to rise ;—
 With yawning mouths and with half-open'd eyes,
 They ply the distaff by the winking light,
 And to their daily labour add the night :
 Thus frugally they earn their children's bread,
 And uncorrupted keep their nuptial bed.¹

Some critics find fault with this simile as ill-suited to such a context : but why should not Virgil when about to enter, reluctantly, upon the field of war, indulge his abiding passion for rural life by interpolating this little picture of household duty ?

And he has, in fact, taken it out of Homer : as he has many illustrations and pictures whereby, as we know, he was wont to escape from scenes of war and slaughter, and withdraw himself among the safe recesses of Nature. For instance, he tells us how the wearied Latins were thrown into confusion :

Thus, when the swain, within a hollow rock,
 Invades the bees with suffocating smoke,
 They run around, or labour on their wings,
 Disus'd to flight, and shoot their sleepy stings ;
 To shun the bitter fumes, in vain they try ;
 Black vapours, issuing from the vent, involve the sky.²

Again, he interposes the following lines in the midst of a most savage scene of combat :

The Trojan chief who, held at bay from far,
 On his Vulcanian orb sustain'd the war.
 As, when thick hail comes rattling in the wind,
 The ploughman, passenger, and lab'ring hind,
 For shelter to the neighb'ring covert fly,
 Or hous'd, or safe in hollow caverns, lie :

¹ *Aen.* viii. 407 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* xii. 587 (Dryden).

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But that o'erblown, when heaven above them smiles,
 Return to travail, and renew their toils :
 Aeneas thus, o'erwhelm'd on every side,
 The storm of darts, undaunted, did abide.¹

In such lines as these, and others of like quality, the Mantuan shepherd, as one may say, has woven his Georgics into the midst of the *Aeneid*. But, as I said, this is a habit which he shares with Homer. Virgil's distinguishing peculiarity lies in the fact that he not merely passionately and longingly pines after rural pleasures when separated from them, but evinces, moreover, a most absolute loathing and detestation for warlike affairs : this is shown silently and unobtrusively, no doubt, yet it is quite unmistakable. Does he not carefully devise, when narrating battle-scenes, that the final end of each of those who fall shall in the highest degree excite our compassion, so that none may indignantly or angrily complain that, in any particular tragedy, the general fate of wretched mortals, and therefore our own too, is viewed with unconcern ? Nor do his lines and rhythm exhibit any triumph or exultation even in the fall of Mezentius, cruel savage and scorner of the Gods as he was ; in fact, the poet, in many ways, took care beforehand to mitigate the sense of his ferocity, partly by those sympathetic traits relating to Lausus, partly, in that he shows remorse for his wickednesses :

My guilt thy growing virtues did defame ;
 My blackness blotted thy unblemish'd name.
 Chas'd from a throne, abandon'd, and exil'd
 For foul misdeeds, were punishments too mild :
 I ow'd my people these, and from their hate,
 With less resentment could have borne my fate.²

And then there is his address to his sorrowing horse :

O Rhoebus ! we have liv'd too long for me—
 If life and long were terms that could agree.

¹ *Aen.* x. 802 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* x. 851 (Dryden).

This day thou either shalt bring back the head
 And bloody trophies of the Trojan dead—
 This day thou either shalt revenge my woe
 For murder'd Lausus, on his cruel foe :
 Or if inexorable Fate deny
 Our conquest, with thy conquer'd master die :
 For after such a lord, I rest secure
 Thou wilt no foreign reins, or Trojan load, endure.
 He said : and straight th' officious courser kneels,
 To take his wonted weight.¹

It is commonly remarked, indeed, that men notorious 733
 for hatred of their kind almost always cherish some object
 of affection : either a dog, or a horse, or a bird, perchance.
 This fact too, therefore, is meant to lead his readers to
 pass a kindlier judgement on Mezentius, Virgil's narrations
 never allowing us to rejoice unqualifiedly in any man's
 death.

Further, whenever compelled to describe some terrible
 scene of wounded and slaughtered foes, whereby his heroes
 are wont to force a path for themselves, the poet contrives
 most ingeniously to impress on us, that this plague of
 martial glory touches every rank of life and all fortunes.
 Not to lay stress on the downfall of Troy, where among
 others :

Then Ripheus followed, in th' unequal fight ;
 Just of his word, observant of the right :
 Heav'n thought not so : Dymas their fate attends,
 With Hypanis, mistaken by their friends.
 Nor, Pantheus, thee thy mitre nor the bands
 Of awful Phoebus saved from impious hands ;²

nor to dwell on the burning of Priam's palace and the
 scornful wrecking of the bridal chambers of royal ladies :
 what a frightful thing it is, that in the Latian battles, so
 many whole families are destroyed, so many bands of

¹ *Aen.* x. 861 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* ii. 427 (Dryden).

brothers blotted out ! For example, when Aeneas is filled with rage to avenge Pallas :

Four sons of Sulmo, four whom Ufens bred,
He took in fight, and living victims led,
To please the ghost of Pallas, and expire
In sacrifice before his fun'ral fire.¹

Truly, one would say that here, as often elsewhere too, revenge appears, to the poet, slight and of little worth, unless brothers perish in one fell attack.

And finally, those oft-recurring passages in which he
734 recalls the family, country, tastes, and pursuits, and, it may be, the grievous lot of those who fall, are well calculated to excite compassion. Such is his intent, I imagine, when he chronicles among the slain, at one time :

Cretheus, whom the Muses held so dear :
He fought with courage, and he sung the fight :
Arms were his business, verses his delight ;²

and at another time :

Antores had from Argos travell'd far,
Alcides' friend, and brother of the war ;
Till, tir'd with toils, fair Italy he chose,
And in Evander's palace sought repose :
Now falling by another wound, his eyes
He casts to heav'n, on Argos thinks, and dies.³

And here it would be inexcusable to pass by one whom Virgil seems to name with particular affection :

Peaceful Menoetes after these he kill'd,
Who long had shunn'd the dangers of the field :
On Lerna's lake a silent life he led,
And with his nets and angle earn'd his bread,
Nor pompous cares nor palaces he knew,
But wisely from th' infectious world withdrew.
Poor was his house : his father's painful hand
Discharg'd his rent, and plough'd another's land.⁴

¹ *Aen.* x. 517 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* ix. 774 (Dryden).

³ *Aen.* x. 779 (Dryden).

⁴ *Aen.* xii. 517 (Dryden).

Assuredly this reads as if the poet had in his mind some Mantuan settler, whom he had known when a boy. And there is an ample harvest of such traits: all of them clearly evincing a disposition which, to use his own words, 'thoroughly detested wars'. Never with Virgil do we feel ourselves—as we do when following Homer's Achilles—carried away with the rush and excitement of glorious combat: nor are our eyes so dazzled by its glamour as to ignore the savage and wholly detestable character of the whole scene.

But let us leave the *Aeneid* for a while and turn to his other poems: here at least we shall find every mark and quality whereby a temper devotedly attached to rural life can possibly declare itself, and we shall trace besides the real reason which made the poet so bitterly and thoroughly detest war: it was simply because nothing more grievously hinders and interferes with the pleasures and tranquil enjoyments of those who toil in the country than war and 735 arms. Only hear his passionate outburst:

Where fraud and rapine right and wrong confound,
Where impious arms from every part resound,
And monstrous crimes in every shape are crown'd.
The peaceful peasant to the war is press'd;
The fields lie fallow in inglorious rest;
The plain no pasture to the flock affords;
The crooked scythes are straighten'd into swords.¹

And, a few verses before, he had displayed a kind of exultation when indulging the prophecy that a time would come when none but weapons of husbandry should once more bear sway throughout the plains of Philippi:

Then, after length of time, the lab'ring swains,
Who turn the turf of those unhappy plains,
Shall rusty piles from the plough'd furrows take,
And over empty helmets pass the rake,—
Amaz'd at antique titles on the stones,
And mighty relics of gigantic bones.²

¹ *Georg.* i. 505 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* i. 493 (Dryden).

And remember, too, how Meliboeus, when he depletes his exile, assigns as the bitterest and most humiliating drop in his cup, that his patrimonial fields would fall by lot as spoil to some legionary :

Did we for these barbarians plant and sow ?
On these, on these, our happy fields bestow ?
Good heav'n ! what dire effects from civil discord
flow !¹

Had any one else seized on his property he could somehow have borne it better : that is just the feeling which those husbandmen would feel who have learnt by experience what it is to have soldiers quartered in their neighbourhood.

It certainly is strange that hatred of war should be so deeply engrained in a Roman : especially as Virgil himself was by no means wanting in the characteristic Roman spirit, nor is he ever slow to chant the wonted paeans about the seven hills and the conquered world : indeed, sometimes he makes skilful mention of this theme in contexts which are very remote from it. For instance :

The shepherd last appears,
And with him all his patrimony bears,
His house and household gods, his trade of war,
His bow and quiver, and his trusty cur.
736 Thus, under heavy arms, the youth of Rome
Their long laborious marches overcome,
Cheerly their tedious travels undergo,
And pitch their sudden camp before the foe.²

In fact, the more the achievements of his countrymen rejoiced his heart, the stronger is the evidence of his thorough abhorrence of war : since not even the honour and glory of his country can restrain his condemnation of it.

¹ *Eclog.* i. 71 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* iii. 344 (Dryden).

In fine, gentlemen, Virgil—if I interpret him aright—will withdraw from any claim to a primary rank in the proud hierarchy of Epic poets without regret, indeed, joyfully and gladly: for, to begin with, he has not drawn one single leading character—not even Aeneas himself—with any real zest: in the second place, he narrates action and affairs in such wise as to show that his main interest lay in recollections of well-loved regions and Nature's charms; lastly, he has plainly declared that all the world of affairs, and especially of military affairs, is alien to him, and that not without disgust does he engage in it. So that I can easily believe the statement which is made by some scholiasts, that Virgil, when near death, by his will directed that the *Aeneid* should be burned: not merely (as they suggest) because the work was imperfect, but—what was far more important—because of a certain weariness and dislike in regard to an unsatisfactory task, which he was conscious had been undertaken against his own true bent, and was far from being wrought after the ideal he had shaped for himself.

It may be asked, perhaps, how it could possibly have happened that a man endowed, if ever man was, with a keen and subtle judgement, and, moreover, of the most delicate modesty, should labour unwillingly on an uncongenial subject. And therefore I propose, in my next lecture, to attempt some explanation of this: and the discussion will, I apprehend, not a little assist our judgement as to the essence of the poetic art and faculty.

To-day, as a last request, I would ask thinking men to reflect whether it may not have been providentially ordered that the first place in Latin poetry should have been assigned to a poet who was as far as possible remote and alien from the instincts and disposition of that warlike race. Who knows but this very circumstance may not 737 have subtly tempered the manners and tastes, not only

of the Romans themselves, but of all those nations too who, to a very great extent, have claimed the Romans as their masters and their models? And this, just in the same way as the bracing and virile note of Homer contributed not a little, as I suppose, to the manly courage of his Greek countrymen.

LECTURE XXXVII

738

A suggestion as to the origin of the Aeneid : it was written by the poet in gratitude for the preservation of his farm. Illustrations of Virgil's extraordinary sympathy with rural folk : his method of describing the different hours of the day : his theories of husbandry, and interest in cattle and in bees. All these he often refers to with playful humour. And throughout there is present in his recollection beyond all else the thought of his all but lost farm.

Do not, gentlemen, I beg, suppose that we are going over trodden ground and wasting time away with mere word-play, if we devote another lecture to the consideration of the central vein and spring of Virgil's poetry. You may be assured it is not my object to prove that he was more willingly the poet of pastoral than of heroic themes. Enough has, I think, been said on that head. But it will be worth while to explain at length how it came about that his gentle and delicate genius came to bid farewell to the rustic muse and betook itself to the dreadful panoply of war and the frigid artificial character of Aeneas.

Now, if any one should turn away at once from such a question on the ground that it can only lead to a doubtful and uncertain answer, I fear that all discussion about poetry will seem of little worth to such a person ; for, as a rule, poetry is far too subtle and complex to be limited and defined with all the exactness of the natural sciences. It deals almost exclusively with men's feelings and affec- 739
tions ; so that we must not imagine that our time is wholly lost, if only we can produce some probable theory, though the exact truth, it may be, remains undiscovered. Moreover, the decision in such a matter belongs, as by a kind of special right, to such as are thorough devotees of Nature

1. 103

and rural life. If their judgements and instincts tally well with our theories—if they feel, with me, that it may well have been that Virgil became an Epic poet in the way that I shall suggest—I shall be quite content with that support. As for others, I hardly expect to prove my case to them.

But, to confess the truth, the views I now submit are by no means my own. For, if the question be asked, 'what obligation was strong enough to induce Virgil—whose spirit was so gentle, so delicately strung, so bent on the pleasures of the country—to expend so great labour, over so long a period, upon a thoroughly alien and unsatisfying task?' we may well reply, in terms which commended themselves not long since to one whose loss was deeply mourned and who was devoted to these studies: namely, that Virgil was a well-known figure at the court of Augustus Caesar, whither he had betaken himself under deep sense of gratitude for many great kindnesses: and that as he was held in high honour there, on account of his poems, and Augustus was intensely anxious that his own name should, like the names of the great kings and warriors of the past, be handed down in song to posterity, some of the courtiers, such as Maecenas perhaps and Horace, beset Virgil urgently with demand for an Epic poem: which is the more probable as the example of the Greeks and of Homer furnished a powerful stimulus,—witness those well-known lines of Propertius: 'Give place, ye Roman writers: give place, ye Greeks; something greater than the *Iliad* is being brought to birth'¹—so it was that Virgil, diffident and good-natured as he was, undertook a task which was a heavy burden to him, and to which his own bent did
740 not lead him; yet throughout the whole poem he was constantly trying to escape from the affairs of State and the turmoil of war into his beloved rural scenes and soli-

¹ Propertius, ii. 34. 65.

tudes, and finding comfort for himself whensoever any chance reference to Nature offered : lastly, Aeneas is drawn by him after a manner which suggests a laborious search on all sides for the character and qualities appropriate to a figure in which he took little interest and indeed hardly realized himself.¹

Such was the view of one who was no mean authority on poetry, and on the tastes and pursuits of the lovers of stream and wood. It is obvious that his judgement most aptly agrees with the view about Virgil adopted in our last lecture, nor do I see anything in his theory either fanciful or plainly improbable.

But there is another point which I desire to lay stress upon in this connexion, because it helps more than anything else to show us that Virgil exhibits, throughout his whole work, an extraordinary self-consistency : and this is really the essence of what I may call our fundamental principle : that all poets who are 'born not made', without exception, possess some special taste or tendency, from whence their poetry is drawn as from a fount, they themselves being for the most part unaware of it : but this special tendency, while it always exists, does not always come to view. Now let us assume the case to have been really something like what has just been suggested.

Forthwith we begin to speculate how it could possibly have come about that Virgil was so deeply attached to Augustus, a poet to an emperor, a man of retirement to a man essentially of affairs and politics : and what can have been the real secret of so close a tie. Virgil was not the man, I apprehend, to seek public office, nor of his own will and wish to frequent royal courts and palaces : nor was Augustus so overbearing and imperious as to urge the poet to an ungrateful task under fear of any serious penalty. But suppose that Virgil betook himself to a burdensome 741

¹ See *Remains of R. H. Froude*, vol. ii, pp. 317, 318 (Lond. 1838).

labour as an evidence of gratitude for the kindness of Augustus which had allowed him to retain his farm and his hearth and home at a time when the homesteads of Mantua were being parcelled out among the soldiery. It would then follow that the poet never willingly abandoned his devotion to the rural Muse : not even when he suffered himself, most completely, to be drawn to totally different subjects. In fact, I maintain that he wrote, for a time, of other than rural delights, simply from his very devotion to the country, which burnt so strongly in his breast that he could deny nothing to the protector to whom he owed the preservation of his loved homestead.

But this view opens out a large field of inquiry, for out of it as a fountain-head flows, one may say, the whole scheme and principle of Virgil's poetry. This, with your permission, I now propose to develop as completely as I can.

First of all, the central fact is his extraordinary and genuine sympathy with all sorts of country-folk ; he did not, like most other writers, especially those of modern times, merely wander vaguely and at random, up and down gloomy or pleasant scenes, in search of something to respond to his own mood and emotions. Not a few, indeed, we have known, who look on Nature just as some disciple of Socrates might, who had strolled somewhat further than usual beyond the bounds of Academus : and subsequently, as is the way with clever minds, returned to the school with a note-book full of similes.

Far other and better too was the way of our poet. His poems carry the impress, not of one who is merely taking a trip into the country, but of one to whom country life is really and in fact a part of his nature. Note how easily and naturally, in the *Eclogues*, he enters into the various characters of each and all of his shepherds. He recalls all that is gentle and sweet to listen to amid the country-

folk, yet he does not ignore the less pleasing side of things : in fact, he shows that he enters gladly into the whole of their life just as he knows it. Even the abuse bandied between a Damoetas and Menalcas gains, in his hands, 742 a certain grace of its own : simply because this rough jesting is not the least untrue to the well-known character of such peasants.

So, too, throughout the whole *Aeneid*, whenever any action takes place in the open air, he drops at once quite naturally, almost it would seem accidentally, into a style which proves the writer's heart bound up with the interests of rural life. The Latins, for instance, observe Aeneas, afar off, in the act of advance in line of battle :

As, when a whirlwind, rushing to the shore
From the mid-ocean, drives the waves before :
The painful hind with heavy heart foresees
The flatted fields, and slaughter of the trees ;
With such impetuous rage the prince appears,
Before his doubled front, nor less destruction bears.¹

As for the *Georgics*, need we say even a single word ? for the main, if not the sole, aim of the poem is to exhibit and illustrate the inner mind of husbandmen, and to commemorate the round of toils and of hopes which recur every year of their lives. We may realize his success in this by simply comparing it a little carefully with the work of others who have attempted to describe rural arts in poetry, either in ancient or modern times. I mean writers such as Aratus, Manilius, or Oppian : and those, among ourselves, who have sung the praises of gardens, of orchards, of hunting, and even (strange theme !) of spinning. Notable writers, assuredly, whom I would by no means exclude from the noble band of poets : but who are, nevertheless, not to be named with Virgil in this connexion, since it is clear they only took up these subjects temporarily, as

¹ *Aen.* xii. 451 (Dryden).

a pastime, while he was manifestly absorbed night and day in his country life.

There is scarcely a period of the year or an hour of the day which he has not distinguished by some mark taken
743 from rustic labours, such marks as are, I imagine, regularly used by husbandmen. Painting the dawn, for instance, he begins thus: 'Whilst the dawn is fresh, whilst the grass is white with hoar frost.'¹ This is beautiful enough; but it could be paralleled in any poet. We have not, as yet, the characteristic note of the husbandmen. But listen to the next line: 'whilst the dew on the tender herb is most grateful to the cattle.' There you can hear the shepherd or the owner of the sheep speaking! And a little further on he adds,—advancing with the day—'when the fourth hour of the day has collected the thirsty heat of the sky, and the plaintive grasshoppers seem to burst the trees of the vineyard with their chirping song.' Again we recognize the touch of one who well knows what it means to toil under a burning sun: and how travellers or labourers, oppressed with the heat, are sometimes almost furious at the harsh insistent chirping of the grasshoppers.

Let us notice how he marks high noon:

'Twas noon; the sultry Dog-star from the sky
Scorch'd Indian swains; the rivel'd grass was dry;

So far there is nothing which decisively marks the rustic: but go on:

The sun with flaming arrows pierc'd the flood,
And, darting to the bottom, bak'd the mud.²

Virgil could, I well believe, have described some more beautiful effect, but then perhaps he was looking around with the same vision as do those who dread excessive heat for the sake of their flocks: and all these are just the things upon which their common talk is wont to lay stress.

¹ *Georg.* iii. 325.

² *Georg.* iv. 425 (Dryden).

And finally, do not let us omit his description of evening, for there we have the real Virgil at his best. Who but 744 Virgil ever elected to indicate that hour by the murmur of bees returning from their day's harvesting ?

Then, having spent the last remains of light,
They give their bodies due repose at night,
When hollow murmurs of their evening bells
Dismiss the sleepy swains, and toll them to their cells.
When once in beds their weary limbs they steep,
No buzzing sounds disturb their golden sleep.
'Tis sacred silence all.¹

I might quote many other passages all of like indication : as where he shows a kind of irritation, when referring to things which are injurious to corn and grain :

Nor yet the ploughman, nor the lab'ring steer,
Sustain alone the hazards of the year ;
But glutton geese, and the Strymonian crane,
With foreign troops invade the tender grain :
And tow'ring weeds malignant shadows yield ;
And spreading succ'ry chokes the rising field ;²

or the lines a little further on :

Tough thistles chok'd the fields, and kill'd the corn,
And an unthrifty crop of weeds was born ;
Then burs and brambles, an unbidden crew
Of graceless guests, th' unhappy field subdue ;
And oats unblest, and darnel domineers,
And shoots its head above the shining ears.

In describing the press of weeds as a ' crop ' (or ' forest ', *sylva*) and declaring that the fields are *domineered*, he seems to use just the very words which would instinctively occur to a husbandman when he saw the hope of the year overwhelmed by these pests and plagues.

Moreover, when, as in many passages, he expresses himself either more grandiloquently, or more meanly, than

¹ *Georg.* iv. 186 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* i. 118 (Dryden).

the nature of the subject demands, I apprehend he is not simply ironical ; but rather fits his phrase to the realism of country talk, and intentionally imparts a tone of uncertainty to it : for Virgil was perhaps unconscious himself, and at all events would have his readers unconscious, how far he was merely playing in a poem of this kind and how far he was really and truly sympathizing with country-folk. Indeed, I quite believe that, just as the renowned Spanish romancer¹ is said to be most serious precisely when he seems to be ridiculing the fancies and boastings of chivalry so rife in his day : so Virgil, not unwillingly, indulged sometimes in over-lofty phraseology. Thus having described the various parts of the plough he enjoins : ' all which remember well to provide and store up long before, if the well-earned honours of the divine country are to be yours.'² In another place, when mentioning the extraordinary number of kinds of vine, he describes it with high-flown similes :

I pass the rest, whose ev'ry race and name,
And kinds, are less material to my theme ;
Which who would learn, as soon may tell the sands,
Driven by the western wind on Libyan lands :
Or number, when the blust'ring Eurus roars,
The billows beating on Ionian shores.³

Not without a certain stamp of the country, too, are those freely-scattered proverbs or short pithy sentences, in which he is wont to clothe the principles and rules of his art. ' Plough stripped, stripped sow : winter is a time of idleness for the husbandman ! ' ⁴ (*Georg.* i. 299). ' Never unwarned are men when rain does them a mischief ' ⁵ (*Georg.* i. 373). ' Praise great estates : cultivate a small

¹ Cervantes. ² *Georg.* i. 167. ³ *Georg.* ii. 103 (Dryden).

⁴ Plough naked, swain, and naked sow the land,
For lazy winter numbs the lab'ring hand (Dryden).

⁵ Wet weather seldom hurts the most unwise,
So plain the signs, such prophets are the skies (Dryden).

one' (*Georg.* ii. 413). We all know how old farm folk especially delight in aphorisms of this kind, and, in this respect at all events, show much real wit : especially when some idle hand needs admonition, some meddlesome city spark or pedantic student a hint to mind his own business. Probably this is the tone that underlies those familiar precepts :

So that, unless the land with daily care
Is exercis'd, and with an iron war
Of rakes and harrows the proud foes expell'd
And birds with clamours frighted from the field—
Unless the boughs are lopp'd that shade the plain,
And heav'n invok'd with vows for fruitful rain—
On other crops you may with envy look,
And shake for food the long-abandoned oak.¹

Moreover, he has taken special care that the stories here and there interspersed throughout his poems should be peculiarly adapted to his favourite rustics, whose constant 746 custom it is to gossip of such things at the end of their day's work :

In winter shall the genial feast be made
Before the fire : by summer in the shade.²

Such stories occur, partly when the name of a place where some notable deed was accomplished is mentioned ; but generally in connexion with some happy invention, or some department of agriculture which calls for special eulogy.

Of his mention of places we speak elsewhere. The story of Aristaeus, towards the conclusion of the poem, will give us a notable instance of his glorification of the art of husbandry. But there are many other cases where Virgil has lightly touched upon, rather than elaborated a story. Having shown, for instance, how vitally important it is that sheep should be of purest whiteness, he glances at some old love-legend of the Gods :

¹ *Georg.* i. 155 (Dryden).

² *Eclog.* v. 70 (Dryden).

'Twas thus, with fleeces milky white (if we
May trust report) Pan, god of Arcady,
Did bribe thee, Cynthia ; nor didst thou disdain,
When call'd in woody shades, to cure a lover's pain.¹

And, after describing minutely a colt of fine breed, he adds :

Such was the steed in Grecian poets famed,
Proud Cyllarus, by Spartan Pollux tam'd ;
Such coursers bore to fight the god of Thrace,
And such, Achilles, was thy warlike race.²

Nor do we only give him praise for introducing these little stories just in the very style and fashion of countrymen : but we admire, too, the art with which he selects, in each particular tale, just those very points which would naturally occur to country-folk if telling the same story. Thus when the Nile overflows, he tells us that the people 'are carried round their fields in painted barges'.³ Does he not here carefully seize on just the feature of the picture which would most powerfully strike and stimulate the imagination of simple country-folk ?

747 Again, in describing the life of the Libyan shepherds :

Why should my Muse enlarge on Libyan swains,
Their scatter'd cottages, and ample plains,
Where oft the flocks without a leader stray,
Or thro' continu'd deserts take their way,
And, feeding, add the length of night to day ?
Whole months they wander, grazing as they go :
Nor folds nor hospitable harbour know :
Such an extent of plains, so vast a space
Of wilds unknown, and of untasted grass,
Allures their eyes : The shepherd last appears,
And with him all his patrimony bears,
His house and household gods, his trade of war,
His bow, his quiver, and his trusty cur.⁴

¹ *Georg.* iii. 391 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* iii. 89 (Dryden).

³ iv. 289. And where in pomp the sun-burnt people ride,
On painted barges, o'er the teeming tide (Dryden).

⁴ *Georg.* iii. 341 (Dryden).

Why does he emphasize 'Such an extent of plains, so vast a space'? I fancy he is imitating the natural language of the shepherds of Italy, who, accustomed to fixed and distinct bounds, with frequent breaks in the landscape, are amazed when they gaze over vast open spaces.

And I rather think we should rank in the same category those many lovely passages in which he betrays the high delight which he takes in the qualities and ways of all animals, especially cattle and bees: indeed, he dwells on all of them with a real affection: and this is one true test which distinguishes the true and sincere lover of rustic life from such as pursue the same means and ends, through a low, mercenary motive. These last look upon all sorts of cattle as an instrumental accessory contributing to the market value of the estate: thus they rear and protect their herds, their flocks, their dogs, just in the same way as they would take pains to repair their ploughs and their harness, or to replace them when worn out: and when finally past work and useless they send them away without pang or scruple. The former, on the other hand, live with their dumb animals almost as if they were friends and comrades: detect and divine with anxious care their needs, their troubles, their comforts, indeed (if I may say so) their utterances. In short, Virgil seems to ascribe personality to wild animals as well as to cattle, not, as most do, for the sake of poetic charm, but far more that he might satisfy the real affection which he always felt for those who ministered to and shared his country pleasures.

There was, however, I apprehend, a twofold reason why 748 Virgil's poetry is so deeply imbued with this tone and spirit. I believe that part of what he has said is due to the teaching of a high philosophy: part to his simple innate affection for country-folk. Of the first I hope to speak elsewhere. Now I will consider briefly a few characteristics which manifest his rural affections.

And yet (to speak the truth) these two causes—simple country instincts and a sound philosophy—are bound together by a common tie, and that of the closest : so that the more decisive confirmation of any view or opinion there can hardly be, than if the better and wiser of the peasant folk have felt their way by wish and instinct to the same conclusion. Thus the Pythagorean, or rather Platonic, fables which Virgil adopts concerning the genesis and destruction of animals show much in common with the views which I am about to quote. But I shall deal with this subsequently. Let us now carefully consider whether his touching lines concerning the tending of goats are not well in keeping with the instincts of country rustics. He imagines himself—a common device with him—discussing the case with some one rather inclined to undervalue goats, and replies to him as follows :

This during winter's drisly reign be done,
Till the new Ram receives th' exalted sun :
For hairy goats of equal profit are
With woolly sheep, and ask an equal care.
'Tis true, the fleece, when drunk with Tyrian juice,
Is dearly sold ; but not for needful use :
For the salacious goat increases more,
And twice as largely yields her milky store. . . .
Meantime the pastor shears their hoary beards,
And eases of their hair, the loaden herds.
Their camelots warm in tents the soldier hold,
And shield the shivering mariner from cold.
On shrubs they browse, and on the bleaky top
Of rugged hills the thorny bramble crop.
Attended with their bleating kids, they come
At night, unask'd, and mindful of their home ;
And scarce their swelling bags the threshold overcome.¹

749 How full of true affection are those few words—

At night, unask'd, and mindful of their home,

¹ *Georg.* iii. 305 (Dryden).

worked in with consummate art among arguments based on gain and utility. As who should say: The faithful, duteous creatures! spontaneously they trust themselves to man! do they hesitate to care for man and to protect him? And then how tender, and how true to pastoral life, are the lines next following:

So much the more thy diligence bestow
In depth of winter, to defend the snow,
By how much less the tender helpless kind,
For their own ills, can fit provision find.
Then minister the browse with plenteous hand;
And open let thy stacks all winter stand.

'Do not let them,' he says, 'go without the one reward for their labour which is all they ask of us.'

I now pass to the much-praised lines which describe a cattle-plague in the Alpine province. One would anticipate that such a subject would appeal to us by its dreadful character and by the varied picture of bodily agony. But such is Virgil's skill, that he has taken care that these should be wonderfully relieved by the side picture where an ox toiling at the plough is supposed to fall down and immediately expire: whereupon—

The clown, who, cursing Providence, repines,
His mournful fellow from the team disjoins:
With many a groan forsakes his fruitless care,
And in th' unfinish'd furrow leaves the share.¹

That the plough should lie in the furrows in full public gaze, a daily witness to the wide-spreading plague, would be of grave import to the husbandman, though not to others.

And let us just recall what he tells us of the ox that survived his fellow:

The pining steer nor shades of lofty woods
Nor flow'ry meads can ease, nor crystal floods

¹ *Georg.* iii. 517 (Dryden).

Roll'd from the rock : his flabby flanks decrease :
 His eyes are settled in a stupid peace ;
 His bulk too weighty for his thighs is grown ;
 And his unwieldy neck hangs drooping down.¹

All these details, no doubt, point to rapidly encroaching disease. But, with exquisite adroitness, the poet makes
 750 them appear to be proofs of the animal's sorrow for his lost companion. And thus, advisedly but unobtrusively, he attributes almost human affection to the chief of the herd. Then he offers reasons for holding their fate to be unwontedly hard :

Now what avails his well-deserving toil
 To turn the glebe or smooth the rugged soil ?
 And yet he never supp'd in solemn state,
 (Nor undigested feasts did urge his fate),
 Nor day to night luxuriously did join,
 Nor surfeited on rich Campanian wine.
 Simple his beverage, homely was his food :
 The wholesome herbage and the running flood :
 No dreadful dreams awak'd him with affright ;
 His pains by day secur'd his rest by night.

The force of the lines is obviously to impress on us that the ox suffered, not merely innocently but more than that, even though, as one may say, a plain liver and worker : for the tone of the lines is intentionally such as might apply to a man just as well as to a dumb animal. And who does not know that country-folk often speak in like fashion of their dogs, their oxen, of all their cattle ?

343 Here all is grave and serious. But in like connexion Virgil usually plays lightly, and indulges in a kind of irony : just as parents sometimes rally their children, at once veiling and indulging the abounding strength of their affection. The feeling itself bubbles up naturally, of course : but they wish it veiled, well aware that, to others, it may

¹ *Georg.* iii. 520 (Dryden).

seem extravagant and foolish. May we not put in the like category all those frequent touches in Virgil's work, pre-eminently tender and humorous, upon the ways and characters of animal life? Often, believe me, beneath this show of levity, there lies something graver and more tender than most readers of poetry would be likely to sympathize with or understand. For instance: among the signs of fair weather the poet reckons the flight of birds returning to their homes and nestlings:

Then, thrice the ravens rend the liquid air,
And croaking loud proclaim the settled fair.
Then, round their airy palaces they fly,
To greet the sun; and, seiz'd with secret joy,
When storms are over-blown, with food repair
To their forsaken nests, and callow care.¹ 751

Into a perfectly ordinary occurrence he reads a far from ordinary affection. We recognize the hand of the same Virgil who elsewhere stigmatizes the ploughman as *cruel*, because he has rifled the nightingale's nest, and she pours forth her mournful note through the live-long night. And why not? for indeed he ever contemplates the gambolling of birds, their homes, their flights, with almost exactly the same pleasure as kindly elders watch boys and girls at play. In fact, he recounts the habits and ways of all kinds of cattle and wild animals, like a man amusing himself with rallying his friends and cronies:

Besides, the several sorts of wat'ry fowls,
That swim the seas or haunt the standing pools,
The swans that sail along the silver flood,
And dive with stretching necks to search their food,
Then lave their backs with sprinkling dews in vain,
And stem the stream to meet the promis'd rain.
The crow with clam'rous cries the show'r demands,
And single stalks along the desert sands.²

But nowhere is he more delicate in touch or truer to

¹ *Georg.* i. 410 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* i. 383 (Dryden).

nature than where there chances to be mention of the dove: for this bird, beyond all others it would seem, he specially loved. Listen to this:

As, when the dove her rocky hold forsakes,
Rous'd in a fright, her sounding wings she shakes;
The cavern rings with clatt'ring; out she flies,
And leaves her callow care, and cleaves the skies;
At first she flutters: but at length she springs
To smoother flight, and shoots upon her wings.¹

He first of all highly resents the bird's disturbance from its quiet corner: and then with delighted gaze watches it rejoicing in even and gentle flight.

752 But Virgil's chiefest characteristic in this connexion is his constant humorous play upon animals, with implied
402 ridicule at the expense of us poor mortals, whose manners and little ways are brought in to illustrate the animal life. Consider the part of his poem where he lays down rules as to 'bullocks able to draw the plough'.² He selects advisedly, does he not? words which apply to the discipline of youth:

The calf, by nature and by genius made
To turn the glebe, breed to the rural trade:
Set him betimes to school: and let him be
Instructed there in rules of husbandry,
While yet his youth is flexible and green
Nor bad examples of the world has seen.³

And a few lines on, he speaks of 'untamed youth', and advises accustoming 'the freedom of their necks to bondage'. Here he strikes, under cover, at the boastful bluster of rude and violent men: implying that there can be nothing laudable or great in defying law and government, since even calves do just the same. But if any reader would amuse himself yet more fully with by-play of this

¹ *Aen.* v. 213 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* iii. 50.

³ *Georg.* iii. 163 (Dryden).

kind, let him turn to that most graceful poem concerning bees and bee nature, which closes the series of Georgics. Nothing, not even in Virgil himself, is so thoroughly Virgilian. The whole point and force lies mainly in a comparison between the great leaders, the populace, the civil wars, of the Romans, with those of the bees. Hence we have warlike verse of swelling sound such as this :

But, if intestine broils alarm the hive,
 (For two pretenders oft for empire strive),
 The vulgar in divided factions jar ;
 And murm'ring sounds proclaim the civil war.
 Inflam'd with ire, and trembling with disdain,
 Scarce can their limbs their mighty souls contain.
 With shouts the cowards' courage they excite,
 And martial clangors call them out to fight :
 With hoarse alarms the hollow camp rebounds,
 That imitate the trumpets' angry sounds : . . .
 . . . Full in the midst the haughty monarchs ride ;
 The trusty guards come up, and close the side ;
 With shouts the daring foe to battle is defy'd.¹

Hence, too, those many passages which credit the bees 753
 with possessing all the formal elements of a civil government :

Of all the race of animals, alone
 The bees have common cities of their own,
 And common sons : beneath one law they live,
 And with one common stock their traffic drive.²

And hence the popular belief as to their mode of propagation :

But in their mouths reside their genial pow'rs :
 They gather children from the leaves and flow'rs.
 Thus make they kings to fill the regal seat,
 And thus their little citizens create.³

Georg. iv. 67 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* iv. 153 (Dryden).

³ *Georg.* iv. 200 (Dryden).

The whole scene is meant to be a humorous skit, though this is expressed only in the one word 'citizens'; and in adapting formal phrases from the Roman Forum, from the camp and law-courts, to so trivial a detail, he was perhaps laughing at his countrymen's pride in their civic life, just as he had previously satirized their warlike spirit in the combats of the bees.

402 But while I certainly suggest that this purpose was vaguely present to the mind of the great poet, I am far from maintaining that he completely realized whither it tended, and how widely it might apply. Rather (as is often the case with many people) it was through a scarcely conscious instinct that Virgil let drop phrases which exactly fitted the occasion; in this too not unlike the more intelligent countrymen, whose speech is often more wise and weighty than the men themselves.

Some may expect that we should note under this head the injunctions Virgil carefully lays down too, with regard to the culture of vines, inasmuch as he was just as zealous for the care and management of trees as of animals, and was herein, too, wonderfully in sympathy with husbandmen. I mean where he enjoins almost the same precautions in the case of vines as he has prescribed for young oxen:

Yet these, receiving graffs of other kind,
Or thence transplanted, change their savage mind:
Their wildness lose, and, quitting Nature's part,
Obey the rules and discipline of art.¹

But, in their tender nonage, while they spread
Their springing leaves, and lift their infant head,
And upward while they shoot in open air,
Indulge their childhood and the nurselings spare.²

754 But, when the rooted vines, with steady hold,
Can clasp their elms, then, husbandman, be bold

¹ *Georg.* ii. 51 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* ii. 363 (Dryden).

To lop the disobedient boughs, that stray'd
Beyond their ranks : let crooked steel invade
The lawless troops, which discipline disclaim,
And their superfluous growth with rigour tame.¹

While yet the tender gems but just appear,
Unable to sustain the uncertain year.²

Many poets and writers have ascribed feeling to seed and plant, showing that they themselves joyed and sorrowed with them. But Virgil has dwelt upon this fancy with an exceptional, one may say indeed, tutelary love. Thus :

'The plants you sow will revive their spirits'.³

The tender twig shoots upward to the skies,
And on the faith of the new sun relies.
The swerving vines on the tall elms prevail ;
Unhurt by southern showers or northern hail,
They spread their gems the genial warmth to share,
And boldly trust the buds in open air.⁴

Nor should his account of grafting be unnoticed :

And in short space the laden boughs arise,
With happy fruit advancing to the skies.
The mother-plant admires the leaves unknown
Of alien trees, and apples not her own.⁵

And here another common trait of husbandmen must not be overlooked, their indulgence, namely, in a kind of triumph, and, as it were, delighted exaltation on the successful issue of their art and effort. Such as these, for instance :

A madness so devout the vineyard fills ;
In hollow vallies and on rising hills,
On whate'er side he turns his honest face,
And dances in the wind, those fields are in his grace.
To Bacchus, therefore, let us tune our lays,
And in our mother tongue resound his praise.⁶

¹ *Georg.* ii. 367 (Dryden).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Georg.* ii. 350.

⁴ *Georg.* ii. 332 (Dryden).

⁵ *Georg.* ii. 81 (Dryden).

⁶ *Georg.* ii. 390 (Dryden).

To quit his care, he gather'd, first of all,
In spring the roses, apples in the fall.¹

His limes were first in flow'rs ; his lofty pines,
With friendly shade, secured his tender vines.
For ev'ry bloom his trees in spring afford,
An autumn apple was by tale restor'd.²

And this autumnal song, though of gentler and quieter strain, yet is in true keeping with the feelings of rustics, of the older men especially :

Thus every sev'ral season is employ'd :
Some spent in toil, and some in ease enjoy'd.
The yeanning ewes prevent the springing year :
The laded boughs their fruits in autumn bear :
'Tis then the vine her liquid harvest yields,
Bak'd in the sunshine of ascending fields.
The winter comes ; and then the falling mast
For greedy swine provides a full repast :
Then olives, ground in mills, their fatness boast,
And winter fruits are mellow'd by the frost.³

755 On the other hand, there are sketches too of vine-growers and gardeners grumbling when the season is bad :

And, when cold winter split the rocks in twain,
And ice the running rivers did restrain,
He strip'd the bear's-foot of its leafy growth,
And calling western winds, accused the spring of sloth.⁴

Or if Aurora, with half-open'd eyes,
And a pale sickly cheek, salute the skies ;
How shall the vine, with tender leaves, defend
Her teeming clusters, when the storms descend,
When ridgy roofs and tiles can scarce avail
To bar the ruin of the rattling hail ?⁵

The rustic pretends to be filled with a kind of sympathizing pity : as if leaf and fruit were conscious that they were being harshly and unworthily treated.

¹ *Georg.* iv. 134 (Dryden). ² *Ibid.* 141. ³ *Georg.* ii. 516 (Dryden).

⁴ *Georg.* iv. 135 (Dryden).

⁵ *Georg.* i. 446 (Dryden).

Bearing all this in mind, we need feel no surprise that Virgil fully shared the common feeling of country-folk in this respect also, that he craved and pined not merely for the *country*, but for *his own* fields and haunts: and cherished so particular and pre-eminent a love for his paternal fields, that, if they were safe, he was: were they ruined, so was he. And thus, as I have already said, he could not find it in his heart to refuse anything to the powerful friend, whose unassisted favour had preserved his little estate to him: whether it were Augustus, or, as seems more likely perhaps, Maecenas. Moreover, how deeply this affection for home had struck root in Virgil's mind, is amply proved by that well-known eclogue which deservedly ranks first: both in point of date (for all the rest, except the second and seventh, were demonstrably written later), and, because, by its means, we penetrate to the very essence and secret spring of his poetry. For, beyond question, whether Meliboeus is lamenting his own sad fate or is congratulating Tityrus on his better fortune, we are conscious that the poet is deeply moved; it is no light and trivial tale, but issues from his own life and inmost heart. A cruel and serious danger, seen close at hand, from which he had escaped almost by a hair's breadth, fanned, as often chances, the slumbering seeds of fire into flame: and thus, in addition to its accustomed charm, every trivial detail which was in any way connected with the little farm estate became thenceforth treasured and venerable. Moreover, in this would be included all that suggested the picture and recollection of it, especially the general accessories and apparatus of country life and rural things. Consequently Virgil would treat this whole theme with the same tender reverence which true-hearted and religious people feel for some one near or dear to them whom they have received back beyond all hope from death's door. 756

In short : just as we may readily believe that Virgil set himself to compose the *Aeneid*, lest he might appear wanting in gratitude to Augustus for his restored farm : so, when he wrote the *Georgics*, there was ever present to eye and thought, I conjecture, the vivid and delightful recollection of his little patrimony, all but lost to him for ever, perhaps not yet wholly and thoroughly secure : and as a result of this, his whole treatment was the more loving, his grasp, as it were, the more intense. For, certainly, even things of little worth in themselves gain a value and become precious, if any attempt be made to wrest them from us : much more is this true of our very hearth and home and all the delightful atmosphere of rural bliss, sacred springs, and familiar streams.

If examples are needed : passing by the well-known lines in the *Eclogues* :

O fortunate old man ! whose farm remains ¹—
and

Farewell, my pastures, my paternal stock ²—
with what feelings, think you, did he touch upon Mantua, when discussing the genius of different soils ?—

757 Then seek Tarentum's lawns and furthest coast,
Or such a field as hapless Mantua lost ;
Where silver swans sail down the wat'ry road,
And graze the floating herbage of the flood.³

Again, what is the meaning of that piteous strain of Aristaeus, as he pours into his mother's ears his plaint for the loss of his bees ?—

O ! where is all thy boasted pity gone,
And promise of the skies to thy deluded son ?
Why didst thou me, unhappy me, create ?
Odious to gods, and born to bitter fate ?

¹ i. 47.

² i. 75.

³ *Georg.* ii. 197 (Dryden).

Whom, scarce my sheep, and scarce my painful plough,
The needful aids of human life allow :

So wretched is thy son, so hard a mother thou.¹

Does not the poet clearly betray his feeling, that his case had been nearly the same? that his whole being trembles whenever he casts his memory back to his threatened farm?

Of like import, too, are the passages where he pictures any one working in *his own* garden, with *his own* hand, about *his own* bee-houses :

With his own hand, the guardian of the bees
For slips of pines may search the mountain trees ;
And with wild thyme and sav'ry plant the plain,
'Till his hard horny fingers ake with pain ;
And deck with fruitful trees the fields around,
And with refreshing waters drench the ground.²

Time after time he gives expression to his abiding consciousness, how nearly he had once been to losing for ever all these delights. Can any one doubt that under all his poetry there lurks a feeling, a kind of dim instinct of this same passion? that his attachment to the fields and rural life is repeatedly heightened by its painful sting?

This, then, is the unifying bond which, in my opinion, links together the various works of this great poet. It remains to inquire if these views do not notably support our theories concerning the whole principle and origin of poetry. I conjectured, you will remember, that the one quality by which it could best be defined was its power to relieve breasts surcharged with emotion. And it thus follows that high renown in this art and faculty has been won by few but those of troubled spirit, whether because their desires are unsatisfied, or because, as one poet has said :

still some bitter Thought destroys
His fancy'd Mirth, and poysons all his Joys.³

¹ *Georg.* iv. 325 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* iv. 112 (Dryden).

³ *Lucr.* iv. 1127 (Creech).

Then it is that they burst forth into passionate verse, when utterly bereft of their beloved object or when at least they apprehend that, at some time, they may be so bereft.

And now pass in review the great series of Virgil's poems. First, when he wrote the *Eclogues*, the soldiers had barely, or perhaps not even that, departed from his fields. Next, the keen memory of his anxious apprehension is felt throughout the *Georgics* (not to mention that he had then been some time resident at Naples and had not seen his loved home for months). And when, moved by courtesy, and especial gratitude to his benefactors, he undertook the task of the *Aeneid*, even then he was loath to relinquish the pastoral muse : and so sought all occasions and seized every opportunity to scent the breeze that blew from his country and his homestead.

So that it is hard to say which of his poems more deeply penetrates to the very inmost sanctuary of the pastoral Muses : that in which he, avowedly and of purpose, celebrates themselves : or that in which, at frequent intervals, he returns to them out of the strife and tumult of war. In both, at all events, what we have called his master passion served as a powerful stimulus. He missed what he could not live without : and so tried to cheat its absence by song.

Virgil, though an admirer of Lucretius, and almost his contemporary, must nevertheless be clearly distinguished from him in two points, first, in the grounds of consolation which he invariably urges as regards our chequered mortal life ; secondly, in his constant precision in definitely naming particular regions, especially such as were familiar to him, or which, at all events, he had seen. Some few remarks as to his reference to places he had never seen, especially those associated with religion.

ENOUGH and to spare has now been urged to prove our chief point that needed consideration, namely, that the whole range of Virgil's poetry, both through the *Aeneid* and through those poems which avowedly treat of country scenes and tasks, can be traced back to one single thread, to his attachment to Nature and rural life. Indeed, we came to the conclusion that even the product of his genius which is apparently farthest removed from rural ease and quiet—I mean that which has to do with wars and monarchs and the foundation of the Roman name—was undertaken by him for the sole and simple reason that he felt called upon to attempt that special theme out of gratitude to Caesar and Maecenas ; when once his farm and hearth and home had been preserved to him, there was no request from such powerful friends which he could deny.

In the next place, another question suggests itself : namely, what is the essential distinction between Virgil and Lucretius ? And although, to a large extent, we have already sufficiently dealt with it, yet there remain some few further remarks, which it may perhaps be worth while to set down. 760

And, first of all, we must not forget this : simple considerations of time and place make it almost inevitable

that Virgil must have had Lucretius often in his mind, and have been conscious of that undefined subtle bond which links together great writers in kindred subjects. We are told¹ that in the very year in which Lucretius died, at Athens as seems most likely, Virgil came of age at Cremona, and subsequently proceeded to Rome. Can we conceive it possible that such a youth as Virgil should not have been deeply touched by the death of Lucretius, by that time a poet of renown : and even more by the manner of that death, if the story is true that he died by his own hand ? It is certainly the case that those pathetic lines touching the melancholy fate of suicides are inspired, as much as any lines in Virgil, by a deeply personal feeling :

Next comes their portion in the gloom
 Who guiltless sent themselves to doom,
 And all for loathing of the day
 In madness threw their lives away :
 How gladly now in upper air
 Contempt and beggary would they bear,
 And labour's sorest pain !
 Fate bars the way : around their keep
 The slow unlovely waters creep
 And bind with ninefold chain.²

One might almost fancy that the poet intentionally wrote thus by way of antidote to those well-known and pernicious lines of Lucretius in which he praises Democritus's death by his own act :

Democritus, as feeble age came on,
 And told him, that 'twas time he should be gone,
 (For then his Mind's brisk powers grew weak) he cry'd,
 I will obey thy summons, Fate, and dy'd.³

Even the open and direct commendation of such self-chosen voluntary death could find a welcome in his mind :

¹ Donat. *Vit. Virg.* See *Fast. Hell.* ii. 193.

² *Aen.* vi. 434 (Conington).

³ *Lucr.* iii. 1052 (Creech).

For if the Race thou hast already run
 Was pleasant, if with joy thou saw'st the sun ;
 If all thy pleasures did not pass thy mind
 As thro' a sieve, but left some sweets behind :
 Why do'st thou not then like a thankful Guest
 Rise chearfully from Life's abundant Feast,
 And with a quiet mind go take thy rest ?
 But if all those Delights are lost and gone,
 Spilt idly all, and Life a burthen grown ;
 Then why, fond Mortal, do'st thou ask for more,
 Why still desire t' increase thy wretched store,
 And wish for what must waste like those before ?
 Not rather free thy self from pains and fear,
 And end thy Life and necessary care ? ¹

These lines sound the mournful and bitter note so characteristic of Lucretius' poetry, who can look with cool and apathetic eye upon both the comforts and troubles of life. Virgil's brief but sweet and tender words, on the other hand, while without the least attempt to deny that the order of our life here is full of calamity, yet take on a kindly and mellow tone which freely and easily penetrates the soul, and by its silent, quiet influence, helps us to bear the burden.

And this should be well weighed by those who maintain that Virgil had leanings towards Epicureanism. I refer to this now, merely because I do not wish to omit any fact in Virgil which shows that he bore Lucretius in mind.

But let us ask ourselves whether this one topic of voluntary death does not aptly illustrate the whole range of distinction between the two poets. Each alike drew his main interest and inspiration from the marvels of Nature and country life ; yet we have seen that their characters and their worldly fortunes differed greatly, and consequently that there is a great gulf between the two, and they look upon the same objects with very different eyes. Lucretius, after long and weary toil in the quest of truth, with little or

¹ Lucr. iii. 948 (Creech).

no result, as he deemed, finally found refuge for his wearied spirit in the mysteries of Nature, as in a kind of haven where he might for a while find delight in great and wonderful imaginations drawn from all sides ; and might, so to speak, revel in an order of dreaming speculations, that lost
762 themselves in boundless infinities. Virgil, on the other hand, who had been accustomed from earliest boyhood to rustic life and to stream and forest, through the whole of his life cheerfully and gladly escaped from camp and town to his beloved country haunts, as if to his own true home circle in which he might make sure of putting off all apprehensions, pain, and trouble. Lucretius was satisfied if he could for one short hour rest and soothe his fevered soul by contemplation of the majesty of Nature, or its gentle movements, or alluring aspects of form and colour. Virgil held converse with hill, wood, and stream, as with dear friends, seen once more after long absence. Consequently with Lucretius, though Nature often seems to smile and rejoice in the pictures which he paints of her, as in those triumphant and splendid lines concerning the delights of spring-time :

First spring and Venus, kindest powers, inspire
Melting Thoughts, soft Wishes, gay Desire,
And warm Favonius fans the Amorous fire :
Then Mother Flora, to prepare the way,
Makes all the Field look glorious, green and gay,
And freely scatters with a bounteous hand
Her sweetest, fairest Flowers o're the Land :¹

yet you will never find him resting satisfied in such rural repose : nor does he suffer himself to be so borne and led by some powerful impulse to country solitude, as ever to forget his own bitter experience, and his harsh creed touching the whole human race. On the other hand, in Virgil, though there are again and again thoughts and scenes of sadness, yet they are never without some special consola-

¹ *Lucr. v. 736* (Creech).

tion of their own, being closely coupled with a pleasing memory of bygone days. Indeed, this is the peculiar and most welcome blessing that springs from the recollection of a happily-spent youth, that it keeps alive a sure and certain belief in the existence, in some far-off, unknown region, of a benevolent Power which tempers the ills of life, and therefore, perhaps, will not suffer all things to rush headlong to disaster. A certain unexpressed and healthful vein of some such hope as this runs even through 763 those passages of Virgil which, plainly and unconcealedly, evince a sick and disturbed mind. For instance :

Now falling by another's wound, his eyes
He casts to heaven, *on Argos thinks*, and dies.¹

Or the lines describing Dido's mien, at the very point of death :

Thrice op'd her heavy eyes, *and saw the light*,
But, having found it, sickened at the sight ;
(And clos'd her lids at last in endless night.²)

The suggestion is clear, that after the many calamities and distresses, either of banishment from home or of unrequited love, there still remains some blessing on which each may lay hold amid the changes and chances of this mortal life.

Then, does he not ever seek to palliate his frequent references to 'sick mortality', 'wretched men', and such-like phrases, with some words of better omen ? as where he tells us that all heaven is divided into five parts, or zones :

Five girdles bind the skies : the torrid zone
Glows with the passing and repassing sun :
Far on the right and left, th' extremes of heav'n
To frosts and snows and bitter blasts are giv'n ;
Betwixt the midst and these, the gods assign'd
*Two habitable seats for human kind.*³

¹ *Aen.* x. 781 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* iv. 691 (Dryden).

³ *Georg.* i. 233 (Dryden).

With these lines may be coupled that which he says in praise of the flocks of goats :

Meantime the pastor shears their hoary beards,
And eases of their hair the loaden herds.
Their camelots warm in tents the soldier hold,
And shield the shivering mariner from cold.¹

He seems not quite satisfied that the sailor should be described as 'shivering', without pointing to the protection which Nature herself spontaneously affords against the cold.

The next passage I quote is more austere :

In youth alone, unhappy mortals live ;
But, ah ! the mighty bliss is fugitive :
Discolour'd sickness, anxious labour, come,
And age, and death's inexorable doom.²

764 Yet from the very spring from which these sorrows come there rises also a thought which may give consolation ; there is the suggestion of a generation yet to come, and there is the vivid and proud picture of a colt of noble breed :

Upright he walks, on pasterns firm and straight ;
His motions easy : prancing in his gait :
The first to lead the way, to tempt the flood,
To pass the bridge unknown, nor fear the trembling wood.³

Could he have hit upon anything better fitted to stand in contrast over against those lines of sadness and of bitterness than the sportive gambols of an untamed colt ?

Again, there is such method in these allusions that one might almost say Virgil deliberately set himself to contradict the conclusions of Epicurus and Lucretius, published as they were with most imposingly high-sounding phrase, concerning the shortcomings of Nature and the universe. Lucretius, for instance, echoing Epicurus, declares :

¹ *Georg.* iii. 311 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* iii. 66 (Dryden).

³ *Georg.* iii. 76 (Dryden).

For were I ignorant how Beings rise,
How Things begin ; yet reasons from the Skies,
From every Thing deduc't, will plainly prove
This World ne're framed by the wise Powers above,
So foolish the Design, contriv'd so ill.

And note what it is he, first of all, fastens upon :

For first : those tracts of Air what creatures fill ?
Why Beasts in every Grove, and shady Hill ?
Vast Pools take part, and the impetuous Tide,
Whose spreading Waves the distant Shores divide :
Two parts in three the Torrid Zone doth burn,
Or Frigid chill, and all to Desarts turn.¹

To all this, Virgil, as we have seen, opposes by way of
antidote : p 423

Betwixt the midst and these, the gods assigned
Two hospitable seats for human kind. Virgil's 1.

But to follow Lucretius :

And all the other Fields, what would they breed,
If let alone, but Bryars, Thorns and Weed ?
These are their proper fruits, this Nature wou'd,
Did not laborious Mortals toyl for food,
And tear and plough, and force them to be good.

Nay often too, when Man with pains and toil 765
Hath plough'd and conquer'd the unwilling soil :
When flowers put forth, and budding branches shoot,
Look gay and promise the desired Fruit ;
The scorching Sun, with his too busie beams,
Burns up the fruits, or clouds do drown with streams ;
Or chill'd by too much Snow they soon decay,
Or storms blow them and all our hopes away.

This is a powerful indictment : yet Virgil traverses it in
a few lines :

The Sire of gods and men, with hard decrees,
Forbids our plenty to be bought with ease,
And wills that mortal men, inur'd to toil,
Should exercise, with pains, the grudging soil :

¹ Lucr. v. 197 (Creech).

Himself invented first the shining share,
 And whetted human industry by care ;
 Himself did handicrafts and arts ordain,
 Nor suffered sloth to rust his active reign.¹

The yield of such instances is almost endless : and the point of them all is to prove that Virgil interpreted with a kindlier judgement much that Lucretius deemed wholly intolerable. And this kindliness was not a little due, I apprehend, to the tender recollections which Virgil ever affectionately cherished of his early years. On the other hand, I trace nothing of the kind in Lucretius : never did he, as far as I can discover, recall with pleasure and delight the games and joys of childhood. And this, to my mind, was no doubtful symptom of the madness that was one day to come upon him.

Let us now consider whether these two distinguished Latin poets may not be contrasted in a second respect ; namely, that Lucretius, for the most part, dispenses with any mention of familiar localities, while there is nothing which gives Virgil greater delight than such allusions. Turn over the whole poem of Lucretius from beginning to end, and not once (I venture to say) will you light on the name of a hill or stream introduced, as poets often do, simply for the pleasure of referring to it : the poet all through mentions by their individual names merely such regions as must of necessity be named, if the development of his philosophy is not to halt or falter in some of its details : thus he alludes to the fount of Ammon, or to Helicon, because of some tree that grew there, or ' the spot at Cumae, where the mountains are charged with
 766 acrid sulphur ' .² In striking contrast to this Virgil at once hastens to give the names of places ; thus at the outset of the *Georgics* :

¹ *Georg.* i. 121 (Dryden).

² *Lucr.* vi. 747.

Liber and Ceres who sustainest life, if by your bounty the earth received the rich ear for the acorn of Dodona, and mixed the draughts of the water of Achelous with the juice of the newly discovered grape.¹

And a few lines later :

And thou of groves the dresser, for whom three hundred milk-white steers crop the fruitful bushes of Caea.

And again :

And do thou, great god, leaving thy native grove and lawns of Lycaeus, Pan, thou guardian of the sheep, as thou lovest thine own Maenalus, come to my help, gracious lord of Tegea.

And when he comes to treat of the care of flocks and herds, we see the same method is observed :

Thee too, great Pales, and thee, shepherd from the river Amphrysus, worthy of all remembrance, will we praise in verse : ye too, woods and rivers of Lycaeus.²

In fact, it is the constant practice, first and chiefest with Virgil, and then with almost all who cultivated the same field of Poetry after him, to employ often what are called 'proper' and individual rather than 'common' nouns. For instance, he details the ways and instincts of goats :

They are content to feed in woods and on the very peaks of Lycaeus, and browse on prickly briars, and on bushes that love steep heights.³

And again he insists on the paramount importance of recognizing the special fitness of particular regions :

Then let the learned gard'ner mark with care
The kinds of stocks, and what those kinds will bear ;
Explore the nature of each sev'ral tree,
And, known, improve with artful industry :

¹ *Georg.* i. 7 (Lonsdale and Lee).

² *Georg.* iii. 1.

³ *Georg.* iii. 314.

And let no spot of idle earth be found,
 But cultivate the genius of the ground :
 For open Ismarus will Bacchus please ;
 Taburnus loves the shade of olive-trees.¹

In all these passages, I confess there is a reason involved, 767 and an obvious one, for indicating localities by name. It marks the observant and painstaking husbandman. But oftener still a name is given, with scarcely any reason that springs out of the context, but merely to add a pleasing note and a poetic charm. What other reason could there be, pray, for introducing into those golden lines celebrating the rural life the names of particular places ?

Yet ease with wide domains, caverns and living lakes, and Tempe's cool vale, and the lowing of oxen, and soft slumber beneath the trees are theirs. . . . Oh, where are those plains, and the stream of Spercheus, and Taygetus haunted by the revels of Spartan maids ! Oh ! who will set me down in the cool dells of Haemus, and shield me with the branches' boundless shade ? ²

Certainly, a marvellous conglomeration of places widely separated from one another : so that obviously special names are not assigned in order to blend the whole into a single picture : that indeed is a result not unfrequently attained, if names of places which are familiar and not too remote from each other are introduced. But what possible association can there be between Spercheus and Taygetus ? or between Haemus and either of them ? Clearly we must seek some other explanation of this poetic ornamentation.

Let us, however, first consider one or two further examples. For those hitherto cited are, for the most part, embraced in a single word hastily caught up, as it were, in passing. But there is another class where the adoption of proper names seems intended to evoke a complete picture

¹ *Georg.* ii. 35 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* ii. 468 (Lonsdale and Lee).

of a particular place, with a certain consequent realism. Should it fall short of this, an otherwise exquisite piece of work will be maimed and pointless. For instance: 'For I remember that beneath Oebalia's stately towers where 768 black Galesus soaks the golden fields, I saw an old Corycian swain'¹—and so forth—lines familiar to us all. But what I wish to emphasize with regard to this beautiful passage is the forcible impression conveyed by localities if mentioned by name. Assuredly they suggest that the story is not wholly fictitious: just as in ordinary conversation we can hardly refrain from giving credit to a narrative when set off with all the detail of day, hour, and place. And this depends simply upon introducing the very names: and adding, to complete the effect, any special charm connected with each place, such as its natural beauty or its historic association, or, best of all, its religious sanctity.

Let us pass to another picture which owes its beauty, as I think, in no small degree to the exact and skilful introduction of actual places. For when the poet describes how one of the Furies 'blows to give the shepherd's signal' and 'strains her hellish voice, at which forthwith all the wood shook and the forests echoed from their depths', what is it leads him to add the name of this and that special nook?

The sacred lake of Trivia from afar,
The Veline fountains, and sulphureous Nar
Shake at the baleful blast, the signal of the war.²

For my part, I confidently conjecture we should be extraordinarily impressed with this clever device of our poet, if we saw with our own eyes the actual spots, and could calculate the distance of spot from spot, and follow up the echoes through the winding cliffs and woods and torrent streams.

¹ *Georg.* iv. 125.

² *Aen.* vii. 513 (Dryden).

And it sometimes occurs to me whether the poet intended in these lines to suggest what is said to be a common experience of those accustomed to wide expanses of sea or
 769 river : the extraordinary manner, namely, in which sounds carry and are borne over water, even to places remote beyond belief. For observe, he only mentions water. But whatever may be the reason for the choice of these names, every one, I suppose, will agree that the description would largely lose its beauty and charm if the names of the places, even though unknown to us, were struck out.

I will quote another, and even finer, example : in fact, hardly anything more exquisite can be found in all this most pathetic poet's work. He describes the arrival on the battle-field of a certain priest, who was also skilled in medicine :

His wand and holy words, the viper's rage,
 And venom'd wounds of serpents, could assuage.
 He, when he pleased with powerful juice to steep
 Their temples, shut their eyes in pleasing sleep.
 But vain were Marsian herbs, and magic art,
 To cure the wound giv'n by the Dardan dart.

Instantly availing himself of this mention of well-known hills he imagines the lamentation of all the haunts the priest had been wont to frequent :

Yet his untimely fate th' Angitian woods
 In sighs remurmur'd to the Fucine floods.¹

Nothing could be more concise, yet nothing more pathetic : but note that the whole charm of it turns on the use of the actual names of places : unless perhaps we include too the abrupt ending of the line in the middle. Virgil has, we all know, many such lines : but as a rule they give the impression of being left unfinished by some accident rather than of being intended to correspond to some deep feeling, which perhaps is the case in this instance.

¹ *Aen.* vii. 753 (Dryden).

We now come to consider the numerous similes and images which the poet has formed on the same principle : that is to say, he directly names rivers, mountains, forests, 770 and is not content with the mere description of them, however ornate.

Like wild boar, driven from mountain height
By cries that scare and fangs that bite,
In *Vesulus'* pine-cinctured glen
Long fostered, or *Laurentum's fen*,
'Mid reeds and marsh ground.¹

Why this precise naming of *Vesulus* and the *Laurentian* marsh, if not to bring the whole scene vividly before our eyes and show the chase in its living reality ? The same effect is sought, I apprehend, in that the reference is not 'a wild boar' but (as it is in the Latin) to 'the wild boar' : meaning, doubtless, some renowned and dreaded beast which hunters had known for years as specially haunting these retreats.

And here, as again and again, Virgil betrays his intimate fellow-feeling with the rustic class, by his thorough delight in all kinds of chase and sport, and even in the cries and shouts wherewith hunters cheer themselves on. For besides the express injunctions, or 'decrees', as we may call them, in the *Georgics*, as to training hounds, and making winter joyous by this kind of recreation, there is, too, in the *Aeneid*, much imagery of just the same tenor :

Thus, when a fearful stag is closed around
With crimson toils, or in a river found,
High on the bank the deep-mouth'd hound appears,
Still opening, following still, where'er he steers :
The persecuted creature, to and fro,
Turns here and there, to 'scape his Umbrian foe :
Steep is th' ascent, and, if he gains the land,
The purple death is pitch'd along the strand :
His eager foe, determin'd to the chase,
Stretch'd at his length, gains ground at ev'ry pace :

¹ *Aen.* x. 707 (Conington).

Now to his beamy head he makes his way,
And now he holds, or thinks he holds his prey :
Just at the pinch, the stag springs out with fear ;
He bites the wind, and fills his sounding jaws with air.¹

And, in this respect, the poets of pastoral life strikingly accord with the Homeric poets of action : both highly delight in describing hunters and the chase, but from widely contrasted motives : a Homer delights in it as in a mimicry of war : a Virgil delights in the charm of river and wood, and of adventurous exploration amid trackless ways.

771 Returning, however, to the question already partly discussed, as to naming localities, let me explain, as far as I am able, how it is that nearly every one finds it give pleasure. Of its truth and realism I have already spoken : and of the way in which things seem to come home to us more closely, if described by name. Now I want you to consider whether such local allusions in poetry may not conveniently be divided into three classes. The first, and in a sense the fount and origin of the other two, is the mention of spots well known to the poet in his boyhood. For, just as in our childish years we are, all of us, wont to advance from the familiar sight of father and mother, to notice and care for other persons as we meet them, so with places, we begin by caring for those spots which met our gaze on our first flight from the nest, when we were first trying our wings : afterwards, owing to some resemblance to these spots or to some feature which suggests the memory of them, we extend to other places some measure of the same affection. Consequently, I should advise any one who wishes to examine Virgil's poetry in this respect to begin with the allusions to Mantua or Cremona : to the neighbouring rivers, Mincius, Athesis,

¹ *Aen.* xii. 749 (Dryden).

Eridanus, even to the outline of the distant mountain ranges of the Alps or Apennines : here it was that Nature took him when a boy into her school ; here he learnt the first lessons which enabled him to go forward to a full knowledge of her charms ; here, at least, he formed a standard by which to test every scene which he might meet with in later years. Why is it, think you, that there is such a special charm and appeal in the first and ninth Eclogues, if not that each of them moves within a definite and familiar neighbourhood and is bounded on all sides by known and loved landmarks ? Then again in that magnificent and triumphant passage, in which for the sake of Augustus and his court he adopts a somewhat boastful tone, is not the effect exquisitely toned down by the skill which associates it all with Mantua and the banks of the Mincian river ?—

I, first of Romans, shall in triumph come
 From conquered Greece, and bring her trophies home,
 With foreign spoils adorn my native place,
 And with Idume's palms my Mantua grace.
 Of Parian stone a temple will I raise,
 Where the slow Mincius through the valley strays,
 Where cooling streams invite the flocks to drink,
 And reeds defend the winding water's brink.¹

The mere mention of actual spots adds a sweet charm to a passage which would otherwise have been merely beautiful and splendid.

Again, does he not plainly consider that even his praise of Elysium and its happy groves would be tame and incomplete, did he not accord to the company of blissful dwellers there the charms not merely of the country, but actually of the Cisalpine country ? For he not merely insists that their happiness is due, in great part, to the rustic freedom which allows them to roam at will along

¹ *Georg.* iii. 10 (Dryden).

the fair grassy swards,—as Musaeus declares when asked about Anchises above :

In no fix'd place the happy souls reside,
In groves we live, and lie on mossy beds,
By crystal streams, that murmur through the meads ;¹

—but he even makes no scruple of introducing his own country's familiar Eridanus into the very heart of sacred Elysium. Thus a whole company of departed heroes is seen :

Some cheerful souls were feasting on the plain ;
Some did the song, and some the choir, maintain,
Beneath a laurel shade, where mighty Po
Mounts up to woods above, and hides his head below.²

Had he merely sought some river famed in story, the Rhone, the Tagus, the Arethusa, and many others which poets before him had described in their romances, were 773 ready to his hand. Why he preferred Eridanus to all others I know not, unless because it flows near Mantua : it is nearer than all others except the Mincius : but that river had never been associated in legend with any Nymph or Hero.

Much the same reason probably led him to compare Aeneas, when rousing himself afresh, and prepared for his final combat, not to any chance mountain, but to that which he himself had best known as a boy :

Like Eryx, or like Athos, great he shows,
Or father Apennine, when, white with snows,
His head divine obscure in clouds he hides,
And shakes the sounding forest on his sides.³

I quite believe that Virgil joyfully and eagerly grasped the chance of handing down to fame, with such a crown

¹ *Aen.* vi. 673 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* vi. 656 (Dryden).

³ *Aen.* xii. 701 (Dryden).

of honour, the mountain range, of which for so many years he had been able to catch distant glimpses from his own home and loved farm.

But it is to rivers that he most often returns, being, if ever there was one, a devoted admirer of flowing waters :

So two fair oaks that proudly grow
On *banks of Athesis or Po*
Their unshorn heads aloft display
And tower into the sky.¹

Note the significance of the mention of actual streams, especially of those in his own neighbourhood : for as far as the imagery is concerned the picture would be equally effective, were they left out altogether.

But returning once more to the Mincian river : just consider whether there is not an unusual note of pride and exultation in the lines where he makes mention of the levy sent by Mantua to oppose Mezentius :

Hate to Mezentius arm'd five hundred more,
Whom Mincius from his sire Benacus bore—
Mincius with wreaths of reeds his forehead cover'd
o'er.²

The second class comes very close to the first both in strength of feeling and in beauty of treatment. It consists 774 of the names of places not entirely unknown to him, but nevertheless more remote from his native soil and the home of his boyhood. For, just as it is a common remark, that a traveller never so completely loses recollection of places that he has once seen, that he does not feel a certain half-conscious pleasure in seeing them once more, if by chance he travels the same way again ; in the same way, we may expect to find that poets generally take particular pleasure in referring to places which they have themselves at some time or other actually seen with their own eyes.

¹ *Aen.* ix. 679 (Conington).

² *Aen.* x. 205 (Dryden).

For such experiences awake and revive recollections, however feeble and however dreamy they may be : like musical strains heard once perchance, even at a distance, which subsequently at long interval recur to ear and mind : or perhaps one might better compare the case to the recognition of the features and gesture of some one, whom we have, indeed, seen years before, though hardly conscious of it at the time. On such occasions there is instantly stirred in our mind a vague recollection of our childhood or of our native place or of comrades of past days : much like the reminiscence, which, to Plato, seemed a certain pledge of a former existence. Thus it often happens, that a note of greater tenderness and some slight trace of emotion often seem to associate themselves with the names of these places : just as we sometimes detect a slight tremor in the voice and accent of those with whom we converse, while they themselves perhaps are wholly unconscious of it. An example of this will be found in that passage of the *Aeneid* where the names, number, and native country of certain warriors are set out in order :

Who Tiber's lawns with furrow score
And pure Numicius' sacred shore,
Subdue Rutulian slopes, and plough
Circeius' steep reluctant brow :
Where Anxur boasts her guardian Jove
And greenly blooms Feronia's grove ;
Where Satura's unlovely mere
In sullen quiet sleeps,
And Ufens gropes through marshland drear
And hides him in the deeps.¹

Here Virgil is describing a region, assuredly not wholly
775 unknown to him : for all travellers from Rome to Naples
must pass through it. But in that gloomy and austere
route the one feature which seized his fancy (lover of rivers

¹ *Aen.* vii. 797 (Conington).

as he ever naturally was), was the way in which the Ufens, while pursuing its secret path, as if it would fain hide itself from view, yet again and again would come into sight. And, consequently, he instinctively associates with its name a touch which betrays his lingering recollection : nay, which even suggests that he himself shares the river's desire to hide itself from view.

This fact also suggests, I think, the real reason why the concluding books of the *Aeneid* have a new beauty and a special charm of their own : it is because in them Virgil finds himself in regions which recall at every turn the memories of his country, his home, and his boyhood. Certainly, to my mind, once he reaches the Sixth Book, or the Seventh at all events, his descriptions become, as one may say, more tender and sympathetic ; indeed, the very names of the places alone, enumerated one after another, betray this :

So cries he while the tears run down,
And gives his fleet the rein,
Till, sailing on, the Euboic town
Of Cumae they attain.¹

And again :

And thou, O matron of immortal fame !
Here dying, to the shore hast left thy name :
Caieta still the place is call'd from thee,
The nurse of great Aeneas' infancy.²

I cannot tell whether some shadow of a charm, not really there, affects my judgement : but, when once Virgil reaches the Italian soil and those shores he knew so well, I feel that he is more keenly interested, as if, like Antaeus of the fable, he borrowed strength and power from contact with his native land. So strong, indeed, is the influence of this delight upon him, that, in large degree, it modifies

¹ *Aen.* vi. 1 (Conington).

² *Aen.* vii. 1 (Dryden).

the reluctance with which he, a devoted lover of peace and quiet, usually schools himself to treat of

Wars, horrid wars—a field of blood,
And Tyber rolling with a purple flood.¹

776 But now let us test our view as to this power of names by lines of a character somewhat different from those already quoted :

Beneath him march his rural train,
Whom high Praeneste's walls contain,
Who dwell in Gabian Juno's plain,
Whose haunt is Anio's chilly flood,
And Hernic rocks, by streams bedewed,
Who till Anagnia's bosom green,
Or drink of father Amasene.²

Nothing here, as far as I see, specially suggests strong feeling : but then we have no reason to believe that Virgil had ever travelled in these regions : and thus the lines would seem to belong to the last of the three classes to which I referred ; the class in which writers picture to their mind's eye and describe places which they have never seen, following either some traditional description or an idea conceived by their own imagination. In the same way, when we look at maps of countries, we naturally fill in for ourselves the sites, the distances, and even the colour of the landscape, the rising ground, the sloping valleys, and all the detail in which artists delight : and in this process we are wont, I fancy, to be assisted by vague and unconscious memories of places familiar to us. So again, those who travel by night in unknown regions, when the light is dim or there is no light at all, nevertheless do not fail, as a rule, to frame some conjecture as to the general outline and appearance of the rivers, cities, and hills which they know that they are passing through, although they but barely, if at all, discern them with the outward eye.

¹ *Aen.* vi. 86 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* vii. 681 (Conington).

Now, I apprehend, not much different from their experience is the pleasure realized by both writers and readers of poems, whenever localities on which they have never once set eyes have to be described. They press into their service, to suit the new place, the form and feature of regions familiar and dear to them : and by variously combining these memories, fancy they effect a picture wholly new. This is true even of references to the Gods, especially 777 to Apollo and Diana, introduced in similes, to honour some hero :

Such on Eurotas' banks, or Cynthus' height,
Diana seems : and so she charms the sight,
When in the dance the graceful goddess leads
The choir of nymphs, and over-tops their heads.¹

Like fair Apollo, when he leaves the frost
Of wint'ry Xanthus, and the Lycian coast,
When to his native Delos he resorts,
Ordains the dances, and renews the sports :
Where painted Scythians, mix'd with Cretan bands,
Before the joyful altars join their hands :
Himself, on Cynthus walking, sees below
The merry madness of the sacred show.²

These passages owe much of their grace, and of that 'vividness' which all praise so highly, to the mention by name of Delos, Lycia, Xanthus, Eurotas, and above all Cynthus, a hill held in high reverence. In fact, the principle we have laid down, that narratives of this kind gain much greater appearance of truth, if names are given, is specially true if the names are connected with miraculous actions or visions of the Gods. The mysterious Presence of Deity seems not only to be more true, but seems also to be actually nearer to us, when confined within some definite spot, especially within a spot familiar to us. This quality seems, even in religion itself, and in the honour accorded to

¹ *Aen.* i. 495 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* iv. 143 (Dryden).

temples, shrines, oracles, and other like objects of reverence, to stand out, by a kind of natural law, as of the very first importance. When a particular spot is named, though far remote, as the scene of some sacred mystery and wonder, we instinctively feel that it is only a definite distance—a great distance perhaps, yet none the less one that can be measured—which separates us mortals from the abode of the Deity, and therefore from the Deity itself. What single student, who carefully and piously reads the books of Holy Scripture, does not feel himself deeply moved by the mere mention of cities, rivers, hills, where

77⁸ God has approached unwontedly near to man? especially as there are clear indications that He in some sort favours defined localities, and that wheresoever He has at any time manifested Himself, there, generally, sooner or later, He is wont to return. But, in short, we know by simple experience that hardly anything roots the sense of an ever-present Deity so deeply in the beliefs and feelings of mankind, as the reverence for places; this is why the Divine Providence ordained, in time past, that his own people should be schooled in true religion in this way, by means of the very names themselves, which were given by His own command to certain villages and districts. No expositor of the Holy Scriptures but well knows how largely their teaching turns and depends upon details of this kind. We may well believe, therefore, that Virgil's use of names and places connected with religion is in some sense a reflection from this genuine truth; and though it falls far short, both in dignity and in beauty, yet it has a strange power to affect men's minds, since the places impart a belief in the portents, and the portents create a religious awe for the places.

But most notable of all is the effect when it happens that the memories and the names of places are those closely interwoven with the sacred ritual and the first beginnings

of Virgil's native land. Under this head I believe that ancient poetry can show nothing that can equal, or even approach to, that renowned passage which tells the story of Evander and the site of the Roman city, and in this passage, so full of the work of a consummate artist, there is no touch so attractive as the fact that, little by little, the narrative rises with the theme, and approaches nearer and nearer the highest and loftiest majesty of utterance. At the outset Evander declares :

These woods were first the seat of Silvan pow'rs,
Of nymphs and Fauns ;¹

so far it is only a race of demi-gods rather than deities. Then after a notice of the Carmental gate and altar

Sacred to the name
Of old Carmenta, the prophetic dame,
Who to her son foretold th' Aenean race,
Sublime in fame, and Rome's imperial place.²

Having pointed out, too, the forest of Romulus and the 779 grove of holy Argiletum, he then crowns all with this splendid climax :

Thence, to the steep Tarpeian rock he leads—
Now roof'd with gold, then thatch'd with homely
reeds.

A rev'rent fear (such superstition reigns
Among the rude) ev'n then possess'd the swains.
Some god, they knew—what god they could not tell—
Did there among the sacred horror dwell.
Th' Arcadians thought him Jove : and said they saw
The mighty thund'rer with majestic awe,
Who shook his shield, and dealt his bolts around,
And scatter'd tempests on the teeming ground.

Do we not now clearly see the drift and meaning of all this care shown by great poets in the naming of places ? and what is its real aim and upshot ? It rests upon the verdict of all true-hearted and good men, that there is

¹ *Aen.* viii. 314 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* viii. 340 (Dryden).

not a nook or corner of the world in which something cannot be found which will touch or comfort men's minds with the sense of a divine presence ; and he who can readily and happily seize upon this will assuredly take high rank as a real and genuine poet.

Thus we see that in relation to places, as well as in relation to men's sympathies and pursuits, Virgil is separated from Lucretius by a very striking difference. Nor is this to be wondered at : for clearly it is natural to one and the same character, both to treat nothing that is human as foreign to itself, and to regard scenes and localities which are fraught with human associations with a special affection. In each case there is present to the mind's eye, with power to stimulate and elevate, the solemn thought '*God is in this place*' ; near and round about us, is a mysterious Power, not only infinite and tremendous, but also beneficent to man and caring for our concerns. On the other hand, those who, like Lucretius, are unable to confess or even to tolerate this truth, and yet follow Nature with a genuine passion, as soon as they plunge into its secret deeps, readily fling aside all memories
780 of places and of men, in fear lest, if their mind falls back on such associations, the shadow of that Providence which they detest should obtrude itself upon them. These unfortunate men are ever seeking out new hiding-places and wandering through fresh mazes of thought, lest they be compelled to acknowledge the one Cause and Lawgiver presiding over all. And thus, even these very men serve the cause of truth by their reluctant witness, and by the worship which they unconsciously offer ; but as for themselves they assuredly appear to wander aimlessly in chill and forbidding regions, like men who possess neither country nor household sanctities, and reject, at one and the same time, not only concern for the things of heaven, but even delight in the things of earth.

Now this whole discussion rests upon what we believe to be one essential note of Virgil's poetry, namely, that it pre-eminently inculcates the worship and whole-hearted adoration of a Provident and Benevolent Power. But inasmuch as there are some who hold that Virgil was a sympathizing follower of the school of Epicurus, and since, having them in regard, we have hitherto left untouched that side of his poetry which proves him to have been imbued with a better creed, it now remains for us to examine, formally, which of the two—Epicurus or Plato—was really his master. A wide and weighty question no doubt, but, as I trust, by no means difficult of solution.

Was Virgil an Epicurean? Very slight grounds for the supposition. On the contrary, he is shown to be a true disciple of Plato, for (a) he prefers reminiscences of the past to anticipations of the future; (b) he implies that all living creatures, indeed all nature, bear witness to the presence of Deity; (c) he uses a true Platonic 'irony', and maintains the highest reverence in regard to sacred and eternal things.

THOSE who hold that Virgil is to be ranked as a follower of Epicurus appear to support their case, mainly, on these two grounds: first, that he, now and again, refers to Lucretius in terms of singular admiration and, not doubtfully, declares that he could wish, at all events, to follow in his footsteps; and secondly, that he repeatedly inveighs against death in the tone common to the ordinary run of mankind: as if, this life once ended, no hope of a future remained to mortals. But both these arguments can be easily answered if we will only consider Virgil's tone and method with a little care.

As for his panegyric on Lucretius—when we remember how great a man Lucretius was, and how nearly contemporary with himself, such praise was quite natural in one of his candid and ingenuous spirit, which instinctively accorded praise wheresoever praise was due. But he plainly and openly denies that he recognizes him as his
 782 master. This is the construction I put on those well-known lines we have more than once quoted:

Happy the man, who, studying Nature's laws,
 Through known effects can trace the secret cause— . . .
 But if my heavy blood restrain the flight
 Of my free soul, aspiring to the height
 Of Nature, and unclouded fields of light—

My next desire is, void of care and strife,
To lead a soft, secure, inglorious life.¹

It seems to me, I confess, that in these lines the writer has, with his usual subtlety, hinted at two different schools of philosophy equally with two different kinds of poetry, as allotted by nature to himself and to Lucretius, and he has done this with a touch of humour and an ironical modesty almost worthy of Socrates. For Socrates, as you know, is represented by Plato as habitually professing himself inferior in reasoning power and skill to his opponents, and never more so than when about to upset completely their whole argument.

Remember, too, that he describes as 'blest' the man 'who knows the rural gods': whose mind and soul instinctively feel the near and almost palpable presence in all places of a mysterious and more than human power: and who for that very reason prays 'may I love the rivers and forests, all inglorious though I be'—since, amid such solitudes, 'we are conscious of present Deity.'

In the second place, if we find Virgil now and again expressing himself in Epicurean tone concerning the departed—as, for instance, in those lines on which stress is always laid by those who criticize him in this respect:

A heavy slumber iron-bound
Seals the dull eyes in rest profound:
They close in endless night.²

I reply that this is really an adaptation of Homer's lines:

Stretch'd in the dust, th' unhappy warrior lies,
And sleep eternal seals his swimming eyes.³

And no one, I apprehend, ever suspected Homer of holding the desolate creed that the souls of the dead forthwith are dissolved in thin air and so annihilated. Indeed,

¹ *Georg.* ii. 490, 483 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* x. 745 (Conington).

³ *Il.* xi. 241 (Pope).

783 who is there but well knows that expressions of this sort do not, as a rule, indicate any fixed and definite belief of the speaker : but are rather intended to depict Nature as spontaneously confessing her own weakness, and show how, carried away by sorrow, she is apt to follow the judgement of the eye rather than the mind ? The Bible itself affords many such passages : especially when divine Goodness unbends, so to say, of set purpose, and scruples not to condescend to enter into the everyday anxieties and sympathies of mortal men.

We may, then, put aside these objections, and proceed to consider those passages where Virgil openly professes himself a follower, not of Epicurus, but of Plato, or rather of Pythagoras. In this connexion, two passages, as we all know, are of first importance. In the scene in the other world Anchises teaches his son, almost in the set phrase of the Academy, the noble creed which maintains the being of a world-soul, of a spirit pervading all things : and, in the last book of the *Georgics*, the poet himself, in no dubious language, impresses the same teaching :

Induc'd by such examples, some have taught
That bees have portions of ethereal thought—
Endu'd with particles of heav'nly fires ;
For God the whole created mass inspires.
Through heav'n, and earth, and ocean's depth, he
throws
His influence round, and kindles as he goes.
Hence flocks, and herds, and men, and beasts, and
fowls,
With breath are quicken'd, and attract their souls ;
Hence take the forms his prescience did ordain,
And into him at length resolve again.
No room is left for death : they mount the sky,
And to their own congenial planets fly.¹

He has managed in each passage to infuse into his account a lofty strain of piety : for he assigns to his bees,

¹ *Georg.* iv. 219 (Dryden).

the objects, as he has declared, of his special admiration, an origin and a destiny which link earth to heaven in closest union : and throughout all the long procession of departed heroes, the one point on which he insists is that no mortal man may treat either his own life or his own century as a possession for himself alone, and that humanity may never at any moment regard itself as isolated from its ancestry or its posterity. You can see in each passage 784 that the writer treats his theme as one of no slight importance—nay, rather as the very heart and soul of the task that he has undertaken. Indeed, so far as the passage from the *Georgics* is concerned, the same spirit which ruled and inspired the bees was destined to inform and penetrate with its own sacred and secret power all those other objects among which, amid field and forest, country-folk familiarly live. This is the reason why in his picture of Elysium the poet praises so highly that which suggests the country :

The verdant fields with those of heav'n may vie,
 With æther vested, and a purple sky—
 The blissful seats of happy souls below :
 Stars of their own, and their own suns, they know.¹

In short, he means that nothing exists which does not shine more beautifully, and move men's minds more powerfully when once it is associated with the idea of a divinity diffused through all things.

Moreover, the feeling with which we follow the fate and fortune of Aeneas is very different when we no longer regard him merely as an individual, but, as the poet treats him, as summing up in himself the whole long line of future heroes and patriots : one whom, indeed, not merely men, but Gods, both celestial and infernal, hold in deep and serious regard. Consequently, if any there be who maintain that the poet was here merely deceiving his readers in this description of the lower world, I would

¹ *Aen.* vi. 640 (Dryden).

have them reflect what is the nature of the charge they make against him: it deals with no mere side issue, but rather it affects, not only Virgil's own reputation as a poet, but even the dignity of Poetry itself. For how can any man, endowed with generous feeling, make any real account of an art whose highest glory and triumph could be associated with such glaring deceit? Truly, he who once permits such a thought to enter his mind will, I fear, before long, develop into what Plato terms 'a confirmed hater of all ideas'; and refuse to regard anything whatever as serious, even in the writings of philosophers, much more in those of poets.

785 'But,' it may be objected, 'Aeneas is dismissed by the ivory gate, out of which only deceiving dreams issue, and this is the clearest possible proof' (so they infer) 'that all those details just set forth poetically, whether as to the Infernal regions or the nature of the universe, were baseless inventions.' But reflect, pray, where reasoning of this kind leads us. How many writers have at different times imagined for themselves divers visions whereby they sought to impress upon us their views, either about religion or about life and character! Can we believe for a moment that any one of these writers, not merely was destitute of all belief in what he taught, but designedly emphasized his own deception? as if he said in so many words: 'Take care not to accept these things with approval: for they are all highly-coloured and artificial, and merely meant as ornament.' Whoever would conclude a serious poem—'the master-piece of all his writings'¹—in such a style as this?

Why not rather hold that the real reason why such incidents are narrated in the form of visions is that they belong to a world seen by the mind, not the eye: the world with which men are wont to have intercourse most com-

¹ Cf. Warburton, *Divine Legation*, Bk. II, sect. 4.

pletely, when they are awake in mind only, and their senses are lulled to rest. In such case it follows that the significance of 'the ivory gate' is just the same as if Virgil had stated in terms that Aeneas, awakened from his slumber, realized that all these marvels of sacred mystery had been shown to him in a dream: not because they are false and fictitious, but because he wished to preserve a law which affects all things transcending this world and our material senses. In short, in styling 'dreams' as 'false', he does not, in my view, deny the truth of the things seen as such, but implies that their images, not the actual things, appeared to Aeneas.

And, indeed, there are many reasons which lead me to believe that Virgil accepted a doctrine of this kind from the bottom of his heart and was not merely 'maintaining a thesis' as the Greeks say. In the first place, I would 786 ask you to note how aptly this Platonizing, as I have called it, harmonizes with that one leading characteristic of Virgil's poetry, I mean his tendency to associate all things with memories of the past, rather than with anticipations of the future. We know by experience how those who are sympathetically drawn to Lucretius are ever carried forward further and further with the hope of learning some new thing, and thus stretch their gaze, as it were, over some infinite, immense, ocean: but lovers of Virgil gladly turn their eyes back to their infant days, their childish sports, and all that belongs to their past life. Memory holds the one class, expectation the other. To quote some instances, Virgil—for I have already dealt sufficiently with Lucretius)—glories pre-eminently in the praises and the delights of spring time:

When golden suns appear
And under earth have driv'n the winter year.¹

¹ *Georg.* iv. 51 (Dryden).

Yet never does he so fully revel in its charm as when he chances on some reference to a primitive age :

In this soft season (let me dare to sing)
The world was hatch'd by heaven's imperial king—
In prime of all the year, and holy-days of spring.
Then did the new creation first appear ;
Nor other was the tenor of the year,
When laughing heav'n did the great birth attend,
And eastern winds their wint'ry breath suspend.¹

Nay, he saw that even his praise of agriculture, the one great theme of his poem, would be but flat and incomplete, unless he could blend with it the memory of the happy days of old :

Such was the life the frugal Sabines led :
So Remus and his brother god were bred,
From whom th' austere Etrurian virtue rose ;
And this rude life our homely fathers chose.
Old Rome from such a race deriv'd her birth
(The seat of empire, and the conquer'd earth),
Which now on sev'n high hills triumphant reigns,
And in that compass all the world contains.
Ere Saturn's rebel son usurp'd the skies,
When beasts were only slain for sacrifice,
While peaceful Crete enjoy'd her ancient lord,
Ere sounding hammers forg'd th' inhuman sword.²

But it may be urged : ' How can it possibly be maintained that the memory of the past holds first place in
787 Virgil's poetry, seeing that there is no single poet who has more lovingly fostered a sure and certain hope of times to come, whether by direct prophecy or by other kinds of anticipation? what of the splendid Eclogue about Pollio? what of the many assurances of Gods and augurs which are scattered, here and there, throughout the *Aeneid*, especially concerning Caesar and the Roman city? not to mention the famous pictures of its future, containing, as they do, the very essence of the whole poem, which are

¹ *Georg.* ii. 336 (Dryden).

² *Georg.* ii. 532 (Dryden).

partly represented in the world below, partly worked upon the shield of Aeneas.' But the truth is, that Virgil's subtle genius so treated all such anticipations that in them more than in any other part of the poem can the affectionate reminiscence of the past be seen.

To begin with, in the ' Pollio ' the poet really does nothing more nor less than, under the guise of prophecy, recall the first golden age of the world and the delightful visions of primitive life. He offers nothing new, nothing unheard of, whereby men's minds may be stimulated to greater expectancy: once having called to mind the rule and order of centuries to come, his mind turns back at once to Saturn's reign and the much-vaunted delights of the infant world:

Unlabour'd harvests shall the fields adorn,
And cluster'd grapes shall blush on ev'ry thorn;
The knotted oaks shall show'rs of honey weep.¹

And observe, too, how cunningly, seizing his opportunity, he interjects a mention of the heroes of old, seeing, as he did, that the world was still in throes of conflict and not yet wholly peaceful:

Another Tiphys shall new seas explore;
Another Argo land the chiefs upon th' Iberian shore;
Another Helen other wars create,
And great Achilles urge the Trojan fate.²

He implies that even now, in the fullness of time, his theme can only be fitly and worthily sung with the help of the bards of old: joyfully, indeed, does he name Linus and Orpheus with high honour, and pretends to challenge them to a poetic tourney.

And thus, although in appearance the poem is wholly 788 concerned with anticipation of the future, we perceive that its exquisite charm resides in affectionate retrospect of the

¹ *Eclog.* iv. 28 (Dryden).

² *Eclog.* iv. 34 (Dryden).

past. I touch not the question whether something of holier and more sacred association may not blend with these prophecies—though I certainly think that this is so : such a quality would, at all events, by suggesting a flavour of antiquity commend itself to any lover of ancient times, even though he might be ignorant of the Hebrew prophets.

In the next place, with regard to the contention that Virgil took special interest in omens and prophecies, we should bear well in mind what all such prophecies point to in his poetry. All the visions of Anchises, the Sibyl and the rest simply centre in this :

The subject world shall Rome's dominion own,
And, prostrate, shall adore the nation of the gown.¹

And, leaving aside the Caesars, Julius and Augustus, I do not recollect that they ever laud any hero but such as in the age of the writer himself were already of hoary antiquity: one or two, of later times, he barely names, but it is on the procession of the Alban kings, on a Romulus or a Tarquin, and others who all but belong to the region of fable, that his affection loves to linger. And in this way it has come about, that even in his very forecasting, he manifests and emphasizes his zeal for bygone times.

Let it therefore be taken as settled and established, that the poetry of Virgil is ever affectionately turning back to memories of the early world and the first beginnings of life. And let me now proceed to show what is the link between this and Platonism. We have already said that the sterner muse of Lucretius sought out for itself, as its favourite theme, whatever Nature suggests of mystery, profundity, and infinity. Now let us examine whether the Virgilian muse has not also its element of mystery. If we try to pierce through to the real grounds of this instinctive attraction towards long past ages, there is bound to occur

¹ *Aen.* i. 282 (Dryden).

to us before long the famous speculation of Pythagoras, which teaches that our souls did not have their beginning 789 when born into this world, but that they came from some unknown region, each to dwell in a human body ; nor have they so deeply drunk of the waters of oblivion, but that some tinge and temper of their past existence still lingers with them : and, moreover, that this recollection is constantly revived, and made conscious, by some kind of special sense, implicit and dim, no doubt, but none the less real. The finest poem of the greatest poet within our own times is mainly based on this belief : namely, that our recollections of childhood are touched with their peculiarly exquisite and far-reaching charm, simply because of its dim feeling of a former existence and of a life closer to divine influence.¹

Now, although the teaching and principles of religion hardly countenance this doctrine, it must nevertheless be allowed to border on truth, in so far as it attributes something sacred and solemn to the memories and affections of our childish years. We ourselves know, at all events, how closely Divine Benevolence seemed to us when of tender years : and who can say if all this charm of bygone time may not also speak of that mighty Presence ? But it suffices just to touch upon these things in passing : more especially since they are copiously developed and explained by an author who, as far as my knowledge goes, was the first to declare such a view publicly.² Let me quote a few sentences, though indeed many might be given, from him :

‘We received pleasure, because we were in the presence of God, but we knew it not : we knew not what we received : we did not bring home to ourselves or reflect upon the pleasure we were receiving : but afterwards, when enjoyment is past, reflection comes in. We feel at the time : we recognize and reason afterwards. Such, I say,

¹ Wordsworth, *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*.

² Newman, *Parochial Sermons*, iv. 17.

is the sweetness and softness with which days long passed away fall upon the memory, and strike us. The most ordinary years, when we seemed to be living for nothing, 790 these shine forth to us in their very regularity and orderly course. . . . Such are the feelings with which men often look back on their childhood, when any accident brings it vividly before them. Some relic or token of that early time, some spot, or some book, or a word, or a scent, or a sound, brings them back in memory to the first years of their discipleship, and they then see, what they could not know at the time, that God's presence went up with them and gave them rest.'¹

Moreover, in connexion with this delighted retrospect on our early years, it is worth while noting how Virgil, partly by special choice of particular words, partly by a certain delicate and elaborated tone of description, sometimes makes us conscious that some one impression has sunk deep into his being : no doubt by reason of childish memories with which the thing may perhaps have been associated. Among these (and I will only mention a few instances, and such as first occur to mind) I think that we may reckon this sketch of the paces of the horse :

taught the steed to bound,
To run the ring, and *trace the mazy round* (*glomerare*).²

This word *glomerare* is more felicitously true to nature than would be likely to occur to any one not accustomed by long experience, indeed from childhood, to a horse's ways.

Another word admirably suggests the course of the wind advancing with a sort of steady sweep :

‘The wind flies *sweeping* (*verrens*) in its course the fields and the seas alike.’³

¹ Newman, *Parochial Sermons*, iv. 298.

² *Georg.* iii. 117 (Dryden). ‘Teaching the armed rider how to manage his horse bounding in the plain and proudly *prancing in many a mazy tread*’ (Lonsdale and Lee).

³ *Georg.* iii. 201 (Lonsdale and Lee).

But the whole picture presents many striking details with like quality :

‘ As when a *steady* (*densus*) north-wind comes down (*incubuit*) from the Hyperborean coasts, scattering the storms of Scythia and the dry clouds ; the tall corn and *waving* (*natantes*) fields are *ruffled* (*horrescunt*) with the gentle blasts, and the *tops* (*summae*) of the trees of the forest *roar* (*sonorem*), and long waves press onwards to the shore.’¹

It is clear that one thing alone pressed on the poet’s vision when he wrote these lines : namely, that when the north-wind rages, fields of standing corn roll and swell like 791 the waves of a stormy sea : a sight specially apt to fascinate children.

I might adduce other appearances which, as I suppose, would, even if seen but once, be riveted on his imagination : for instance, the great rainbow *drinks up* (*bibit*) moisture :² goats *hang* (*pendere*) afar from a bushy crag :³ bees *lightly sip* (*libant*) the surfaces of streams :⁴

The dewy moon gives the lawns new life.⁵

In the foregoing cases, all the point and force of the illustrations are centred in a word or two : but there are, besides, not a few instances, where we are not so much struck by individual words, as by the consummate and rare combination of many various details, all tending to produce one picture. Without quoting the passages themselves, let us merely call to mind the dwelling-place suitable for bees as described at the beginning of the fourth Georgic : the cool shady vale whither the poet advises that flock and herd should be led during the mid-day heat : or that renowned harbour and its cave, the home of the Nymphs, with its pendent rocks, in the first Aeneid. These, and many more of like kind, seem drawn, as if the poet had,

¹ *Georg.* iii. 196 (Lonsdale and Lee).

² *Georg.* i. 380.

³ *Eclog.* i. 77.

⁴ *Georg.* iv. 54.

⁵ *Georg.* iii. 337.

in each detail, indulged his affectionate recollection of some spot well known and very dear to him.

Now, let us press on to consider another trait of the Socratic philosophy, and that a decisive one. While Lucretius hardly refers more than once or twice to Pan, to the Nymphs, and to Venus, Virgil, as we know, always and everywhere dwells on such themes with keen delight : from the very commencement of the travels of Aeneas the Gods are represented as his companions, in such a way that we feel that they are never really absent, though, according as need and occasion demand, they at one time withdraw from sight, at another show themselves openly. What else can we infer from such expressions as these?—

Thus having said, she turn'd and made appear
Her neck refulgent
And by her graceful walk the queen of love is known.¹

And a few lines later :

They march obscure : for Venus kindly shrouds,
With mists, their persons, and involves in clouds.

792 Just as a little before, while Troy was in flames, a mist
had veiled herself from view, but now—

she stood reveal'd before my sight—
(Never so radiant did her eyes appear :
Not her own star confess'd a light so clear)—
Great in her charms, as when on gods above
She looks, and breathes herself into their love.²

But why delay over a point so obvious ? the *Aeneid* is full of such indications. I lay no stress on the fact that in his poems the woods and shores are described as peopled by sportive Nymphs, and other deities of like quality, such as were termed the deities of second rank. For this, certainly, was not out of harmony with the theories of Epicurus, who was far from denying that certain images,

¹ *Aen.* i. 402 (Dryden).

² *Aen.* ii. 589 (Dryden).

which have power to touch men's senses, emanate from the sacred personalities of his Deities. But these Virgilian Powers spontaneously associate with mortals, not merely as friendly companions, but as sharers of each man's care and labour. Their duty is concerned to see that men neither do or suffer anything, either heinous or glorious, without their cognizance and assent. Indeed, Virgil has encompassed human life with spiritual personalities, as with 'a cloud of witnesses', always close at hand to protect man: since he teaches unmistakably that they are present and manifest themselves to any one who is travelling through dark and unknown regions:

Obscure they went through dreary shades, that led
 Along the waste dominions of the dead.
 Thus wander travellers in woods by night,
 By the moon's doubtful and malignant light,
 When Jove in dusky clouds involves the skies,
 And the faint crescent shoots by fits before their eyes.¹

The poet, moreover, holds the characteristic doctrine of the Pythagorean creed, which, to use his own words, attributes even to animals without reason,

'a share of the divine mind, and the breath of heaven.'²

I say no more here concerning the bees, but should like to suggest for consideration whether something of the kind be not implied when the poet applies a simile drawn from flocks of birds to the shadowy ghosts:

Th' infernal troops like passing shadows glide,
 And, list'ning, crowd the sweet musician's side—
 (Not flocks of birds, when driv'n by storms or night, 793
 Stretch to the forests with so thick a flight).³

The simile was scarcely needed, merely to emphasize

¹ *Aen.* vi. 268 (Dryden). ² *Georg.* iv. 220 (Lonsdale and Lee).

³ *Georg.* iv. 472 (Dryden).

number: but how if the poet advanced it, as having learned by constant experience the meaning of that deep saying of Plato's,—'Everything in this life gives to wise men some suggestion of the thought of death'?

Another indication, about which there can be no doubt, is to be found in the way in which birds and other animals are used to interpret the will of the Gods. The fact is due to the religious belief of Virgil's time: what is characteristic of the poet is the notable pleasure he evinces in dwelling upon it. I doubt whether anywhere Virgil seems happier in his theme than when he has to celebrate these oracles. A pair of doves, for instance, suddenly appearing to Aeneas, show him the path to the Golden Bough:

Scarce had he said, when, full before his sight,
Two doves, descending from their airy flight,
Secure upon the grassy plain alight. . . .
They fed, and, fluttering, by degrees withdrew
Still further from the place: but still in view;
Hopping and flying thus they led him on
To the slow lake.¹

And then:

whose hateful stench to shun,
They wing'd their flight aloft, then, stooping low,
Perch'd on the double tree, that bears the golden
bough;
Through the green leaves the glittering shadows glow.²

Nothing could be more graceful, nor, I apprehend, truer to nature, so far as the habits and aspect of this bird are concerned: but what is most beautiful of all, and truest to Platonism, is the fact that they are described as 'his mother's birds': thus, free as their flight was, there was a divine instinct that guided them to help her son.

Now, as in this case a pair of doves, so in the story of

¹ *Aen.* vi. 191 (Dryden).

² *Ibid.*

Laocoon that celebrated pair of serpents well shows with what eyes and with what feelings Virgil looked upon the whole race of animals. In the latter instance all is harmful, repulsive, and so described as to suggest a stern act of judgement ; in the former all is attractive and gentle, full of tenderest movement and tone : yet in each case there is implied the presence of a more than human power. Both, it is to be noticed, speak of a pair—two doves, two serpents : which fact alone tends to impress men's minds and to rouse their expectation with the belief that so striking a fact is not due to mere chance. However, much has been written about the Laocoon, and I do not propose to repeat it here. There is one point, though, which I should like to make : grant, if you will, that Virgil, when writing, had the well-known statue in his mind's eye, yet, in many respects, the sculptor has been surpassed by the poet : or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say, the art of sculpture by the poet's art : since the sculptor could only express the keen sense of anguish, while the poet has infused into the whole scene a certain vague terror, plainly suggestive of some mysterious Deity wrathful and in act to strike.

But since our subject has led us to the mention of serpents, it would be inexcusable to overlook that celebrated snake, which, creeping harmlessly and quietly along, tasted the sacrificial offerings at the tomb of Anchises, and then disappeared into the tomb itself. Aeneas, witnessing this spectacle,

The fun'ral honours with more zeal renew'd,
Doubtful if this the place's genius were,
Or guardian of his father's sepulchre.¹

Do we not here recognize Platonic teaching ? for the poet not only speaks of the genius of the place, but of

¹ *Aen.* v. 94 (Dryden).

the man, and implies that, to good and religious men like Anchises, such a genius would become after death their attendant spirit ; or rather their ' Daemon ', if we prefer the language of Socrates.

We must remember, too, the fact that at times he represents Nature as in real sympathy with mankind, and this outward face of the world as responding to men's inner thoughts. Let these fine lines, describing the first approach of Aeneas to the Italian shore, illustrate my 795 meaning : and forgive me if I quote at length : it is the only method of exhibiting the full strength of the passage :

Near the Ceraunian rocks our course we bore—
The shortest passage to th' Italian shore.
Now had the sun withdrawn his radiant light,
And hills were hid in dusky shades of night :
We land, and, on the bosom of the ground,
A safe retreat and a bare lodging found.
Close by the shore we lay ; the sailors keep
Their watches, and the rest securely sleep.
The night, proceeding on with silent pace,
Stood in her noon, and view'd with equal face
Her steepy rise, and her declining race.
Then wakeful Palinurus rose, to spy
The face of heav'n and the nocturnal sky ;
And listen'd every breath of air to try ;
Observes the stars and notes their sliding course,
The Pleiads, Hyads, and their wat'ry force ;
And both the Bears is careful to behold,
And bright Orion, arm'd with burnish'd gold.
Then, when he saw no threat'ning tempest nigh,
But a sure promise of a settled sky,
He gave the sign to weigh : we break our sleep,
Forsake the pleasing shore, and plough the deep.
And now the rising morn with rosy light
Adorns the skies and puts the stars to flight ;
When we from far, like bluish mists, descry
The hills and then the plains of Italy.¹

¹ *Aen.* iii. 506 (Dryden).

There we have a description of the expedition by night, which is not only distinguished, unless I am mistaken, by a sense of tranquil peace, but also by a kind of majesty ; such as was worthy to conduct to their destined goal this band of settlers, whom fate had marked out to be the imperial rulers of the world. Truly, in just accord with such foreshadowed destinies are the descriptions of Orion armoured with gold, and the vision of the stars declining in the silent heavens—an augury to all of the steady and immovable decree of the Fates concerning the Roman state.

I might, too, adduce the passages which describe the settlement of Aeneas in Latium itself, and then his introduction to Evander ; in each, sea and shore, river and woods, breezes and birds, all further him with their aid. All nature is described by the poet in these scenes as being genial, gladsome, and beautiful ; and this, as it seems to me, not without design. Great is the importance, believe me, in a poem, as well as in a picture, of this harmony of sky, sea, land, and of all which meets the view, with the fortunes and the aims of men : not merely on the score of beauty, but also because of its suggestion of a secret and profound truth. 796

But let us now pass on to our third proof of Virgil's Platonic sympathies, which is that he frequently makes use of very obvious 'irony' ; and we know how closely this harmonizes with the Socratic temper. I mean by *irony*, an appearance of playful raillery which a writer employs when he has to praise the ways and habits of living creatures or of any other object of special affection, the strength of which men like to conceal : and on this obvious use of such irony others have spoken sufficiently. But it may be questioned if we should not seek the principle of Virgil's irony in a deeper foundation : seeing that it is closely associated with a true and sincere modesty, and

with what is called learned ignorance, which ever professes, and genuinely believes, itself ignorant of many things. This is the secret, I apprehend, which explains the fact that Virgil, great poet as he was, yet had no scruple in classing himself among the swarm of imitators. He would have us believe, for instance, that in such and such a poem he echoed the Ascræan or the Sicilian or the Homeric Muse; while, really, whatever he has borrowed he has borrowed in such a way that he has made it wholly his own and far better than the original. But owing to a certain modesty and love of concealment, he preferred that nothing should go forth simply as his own. And thus he presents a type of Socratic disposition, both sincere and graceful. We need feel no surprise, therefore, if he evinces this modesty, even in connexion with serious and grave subjects; and, especially, when dealing with things mysterious and sacred. As, for example, when he touches the question of the final punishment of bad men, he does not permit Aeneas even to inquire curiously concerning that dreadful and terrible place of punishment; far less to penetrate thither or see its mysteries with his own eyes:

The chaste and holy race
Are all forbidden this polluted place . . .
Ask not what pains: nor further seek to know
Their process, or the forms of law below.¹

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See how timidly, with what religious awe, the poet shrinks back as soon as he approaches those things which, in his judgement, the Gods have shrouded in mystery. But his instinctive feeling of the eternity of punishment appears in the following lines describing the walls of that dreadful dungeon:

Wide is the fronting gate, and, rais'd on high
With adamantine columns, threats the sky.
Vain is the force of man, and heav'n's as vain,
To crush the pillars which the pile sustain.²

¹ *Aen.* vi. 563, 614 (Dryden).² *Aen.* vi. 552 (Dryden).

Not that he really deemed that the power of the Gods was limited, but he was anxious, it seems to me, to emphasize the real meaning of the future, as neither limited nor to be limited by any bounds—even those assigned by the Gods: and then he implies that the punishment of the wicked is co-extensive with it. How thoroughly consonant is this with Plato's views may be seen by any one who will take the trouble to refer, either to that philosopher's *Republic* or that golden dialogue entitled *Gorgias*. But we are here concerned, not so much to inquire what views these great men held concerning these questions, as to point out how modestly, how reverently, they both approached them. And we know that there is no topic more fitted to test such reverent modesty than the problem of divine retribution and the last great dread of all: so much, then, the more worthy of honour is Virgil, who with a religious self-restraint has superadded nothing of his own to the traditional beliefs concerning this dread place of doom, but has simply touched with his poetic power the conceptions commonly handed down.

Not to dwell upon single instances, however, we may say generally that he maintains throughout, with regard to religious and eternal things, the attitude which he himself inculcates in the Allegory of the prophetic Sibyl. The story has indeed become almost a proverb, the story of her leaves, inscribed with divine prophesyings, and blown and scattered hither and thither by the wind. We can 798 draw no more fitting meaning from this fable, in my judgment, than to suppose the poet to imply that the sole way by which the knowledge of divine things is conceded to mortal men, is that they shall collect from every quarter the traces and fragments of it which have been thrown into confusion by the storm and stress of our daily lives and have been scattered in all directions. Moreover, he not obscurely implies that there will be no repairing of

this disaster, nor will these fragments of truth ever be arranged and made serviceable to mankind, save by constant, devoted prayerfulness. Thus, when Aeneas reaches the threshold of the shrine the prophetess adjures him in these words :

‘Why this delay?’ she cry’d—‘the pow’rs invoke.
Thy prayers alone can open this abode,
Else vain are my demands, and dumb the god.’¹

And then when prayers have been duly offered, the oracles flow forth.

Therefore, since Virgil, in all his poems, ever holds in mind the reverence due to the Gods, the hope of immortality, and, lastly, the belief that virtue is impressed on us, not by laws alone, but by Nature herself: since, moreover, his own spirit was in sympathy with the Platonic teaching in these respects—that he found his chief pleasure in reminiscence of the past; that he, always and everywhere, delighted to recognize the vestiges of a power higher than human; and finally, that he displayed a pious and wise reserve in treating of things of special sacredness: what course is open to us but gladly and unhesitatingly to enrol the great poet among those who sincerely, and not merely in show, desired to defend religion so far as revealed to them? And the vast importance of this fact, even as bearing on the divine teaching in which we now rest, I will indicate, to the best of my power, in another and concluding lecture.

¹ *Aen.* vi. 51 (Dryden).

LECTURE XL

Reasons suggested for concluding the list of Primary Poets with Virgil. 799

A few critical remarks upon Horace. High estimate of Virgil held by those who followed him, especially Christians; an influence felt even to our own times: we may see a providence herein. Indeed, all poetry was given as a kind of preparation for Sacred Truth: poets were to the Gentiles what prophets were to the Jews. Views of the Fathers of the Church on this point. Examples taken from later poets. In conclusion many reasons are adduced for holding that Poetry and Theology have to a great extent drawbacks and compensations in common.

It is the usual experience of those who have taken in hand some great and noble task to which their strength is unequal, that they have to confess that the result is far different from their hope and expectation: since they are conscious of having constantly treated lofty themes in meagre fashion, things of beauty, awkwardly, and important subjects, inadequately. I fully admit this feeling in my own case, and yet at the conclusion of my labours I still maintain my original convictions concerning the main essence of Poetry. Not that I flatter myself that I have in any way really portrayed the very essence and form of that divine art: I see now that I have only been a worker in a small corner of a very wide territory, and that I have not explained what Poetry is in itself, but rather have pointed to certain sure marks and attributes of it. I started with noticing that, both in ordinary daily life and in the other arts which are styled liberal, those 800 qualities are peculiarly denominated poetic which give an indirect expression to the feelings of an eager and overflowing heart, and that such expression is wont to afford the greatest solace to men sorely exercised in mind:

straightway, I was led to speculate whether it might not well be that the poetic art itself, properly and specially so called, might too be due to some such law and principle. Following this idea, I recognized that poets can, in the main, be divided into two classes : for some who write verse seek relief for some disturbing emotion, and, as one may say, a free course for it : while others merely imitate those who are really moved by such incitements. Then, after having indicated certain marks, whereby Primary and true-born poets can be recognized, we proceeded to deal with the work of individual poets, choosing those whom all allow to be the greatest—Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, as well as those others among the ancients who have won for themselves a place in that circle. In describing each one of these, according to our method, by his peculiar qualities, it appeared that the whole might be conveniently divided into two classes : some celebrating the anxieties and affairs of men, others the aspects of heaven and earth : the former active, the latter reflective. Greece, we found, produced poets of action, Rome (which was somewhat surprising) mainly contemplative poets. Finally, we were led to see that our whole review supported the belief that some guidance, higher than human, influenced the rise and decline, each in its due order, of the two poetic classes : such a guidance, I say, as may be easily detected, even by ourselves, if we will look for its traces.

In this great assembly of poets we assigned the last place to Virgil : and this was due partly to the limited time at our disposal, but the main motive was the belief that his poems would be found the most suitable transition to things more sacred and divine : for it was no mere accident that this last of the pagans composed his poems not formally and artificially but from the genuine feelings of his heart.

801 But I am afraid that all the admirers of Horace, with one accord, may take me somewhat severely to task,

because that graceful poet is excluded from the ranks of Primary poets. Certainly, if, in a question of this kind, decisive weight should be allowed to the pleasure enjoyed by those who take up poetical writings for amusement, no one could refuse to Horace the very highest place, or, at all events, one only next to the highest : seeing that he is the most joyous and gay of them all, one who finely tempers gravest themes with jest and laughter : and that not coarse or uncouth, but such as becomes a man of taste and refinement ; and who, when once appreciated, 'plays lightly' (in Persius' phrase) 'round every one's heart.'¹ Moreover, there pleasingly lingers, I dare say, in the memory of each one of us, some ode, or, at any rate, a few verses of Horace, powerful to recall by the sound of words, or even syllables, the delights of our youthful years, and whatever visionary fancies, grave or gay, pleased us in those days. Further (quite contrary, I rather think, to the fate of the greater part of Poetry), as we grow older, we take increasing pleasure in reverting to the poetry of Horace : possibly by reason of the wonderful insight he exhibits into human life and manners : which led an acute judge of literature to insist that no one ever fully appreciates Horace's Epistles till, by long experience, by vigorous effort of his mind, and by sympathetic study, he reaches the standpoint from which Horace set himself to write.²

But though allowing all this, and more than this, yet I reluctantly confess myself hitherto unable to discover any peculiar and dominating spring of Horace's poetry. In fact, I suspect his light touch of all subjects betrays to us that he dwelt with no serious regard on any one of 802 them. He professes at times a notable enthusiasm for the country and rural life : yet one always feels that his interest was rather after the manner of those who merely seek recreation there, than of the country-folk themselves ; that

¹ i. 117.

² Davison's *Remains*, p. 437.

Rome was all the time in his thoughts : that he cherished his little farm and his homely belongings, less for their own sake, than for their restful repose, their elegant hospitalities, and whatsoever other like attractions they offered. In brief : he enrolled himself—which Virgil for his part shrunk from doing—without misgiving, in the ranks of the Epicureans : setting before him as his sole rule of life the hope of grasping the gifts of the passing hour, whatever they might chance to be. Nor did he, like Lucretius, feel conscious of restless disquiet in the midst of all his pleasure, and of a vague longing after an outlook vast and boundless. We see, then, in him a genial gentleman, one too nearly in sympathy with the crowd who indulge their own bent, to be deeply influenced by any tender regard for things far away, and the latter is the instinct which on our principles pre-eminently stamps the genuine poet.

Of Horace, however, let men judge as they please : it will be fully granted by all, that it was especially to Virgil that such Roman literature as developed after his time owed its form and tone. Not one of all those who, in Rome's decline, composed Epics or Pastorals, but shaped himself after Virgil's model. I do not even except Lucan, who, though of a genius and temperament strikingly differing from Virgil's, yet in his style and tone of narrative, and often, too, in the very workmanship and resonance of his phrase, seems intentionally to imitate him.

Moreover, what is more important, we are told that the Roman youth were from earliest boyhood specially educated in the works of Virgil. So reports Quintilian, an undeniable authority on such a point : ' Wisely ', says he, ' has it been decided that reading should begin with Homer and Virgil, even though an appreciation of their beauties will demand a riper judgement.'¹ This is the testimony of a teacher born in Spain and writing at Rome, probably

¹ i. 5.

during the reign of Domitian. Let me quote another witness, this time from Africa, a witness of very different date and different opinions—St. Augustine; he affords precisely the same evidence, that the works of Virgil formed the elementary reading of boys at school. For we gather from many of his writings, and especially from the memoirs of his own life which he has left us, that, in his time and country, Virgil was so largely drawn upon in the instruction of youth, that his tone and temper penetrated into the very heart and soul of every intelligent young man. Augustine,¹ for instance, tells us how Virgil's story of Aeneas pleased his boyish taste beyond all his other studies, and we can easily see from the tone in which he refers to it that tender recollections of that reading were deeply fixed in his mind, even when the follies of that time in his life caused him most shame and regret. Moreover, he often shows real pleasure in quoting in support of Christian hopes those lines of Virgil in which he, though ignorant of the truth, seems to prophesy of a golden race and a new cycle of the ages.² Indeed, in one passage Augustine³ lauds the poet for clearly and openly speaking of 'kingdoms doomed to fall'⁴ in connexion with the Roman State, and that, too, in his own proper person; whereas, when he has occasion to forecast an eternal future for the proud city, it is not he who utters the prophecy, but Jupiter who solemnly declares:

To them no bounds of empire I assign,
Nor term of years to their immortal line.⁵

He dwells with eager delight on anything which falls from his beloved author which seems near akin to any Christian truth.

From this alone we may realize how large was Virgil's 804 share in forming the tone and temper of those whom the

¹ *Conf.* i. 20-2.

² *Eclog.* iv. 5.

³ *Serm.* 136. 10, vol. v, p. 380 (Antwerp, 1700).

⁴ *Georg.* ii. 498.

⁵ *Aen.* i. 278 (Dryden).

Church herself educated : and still more of those who had not yet joined her ranks, as was the case with Augustine himself until middle life. For even those who, like Jerome, sternly set their face against ancient literature, nevertheless realized it to be impossible to educate children of the cultured classes without the study of Virgil. Thus he complains : ‘ Some of God’s priests, laying aside the Gospels and the Prophets, read stage plays, recite verses from Pastoral Eclogues, are constant students of Virgil, and make, what is for youths a necessity, a ground of indulgence for themselves.’¹ Clearly, in his judgement, at all events, the study of Virgil must have been necessary enough in those days !

Now, if we rightly hold that it was the chief and peculiar glory of Plato that the Greeks imbibed from his writings a philosophy, which in a manner prepared the way for the pure Truth of the Gospel—an adequate proof of which, indeed the best of all proofs, is to be found in the life of Justin Martyr—why may we not believe the like power to have resided even in the poems of Virgil, full as they are of Platonic philosophy : and that he imbued his Roman countrymen with a certain vague sense of a better world and of a Truth to be revealed from heaven ? And Virgil’s influence was found to be the more potent and effective by reason of his poetic charm, and the fact that his poems were constantly studied by all men from their earliest youth. Thus they were the more easily led to believe that human souls might live after death, and, being first purified, return at some time to God, unless some heinous wickedness of their past life and a nature hardened in sin should intervene and bar the way. And what is worth all the rest, the nobler minds were taught by Virgil, as by Plato, that not far from any one of us, there is a mysterious
805 Divinity which by no uncertain tokens makes its presence

¹ *Ad Damasum*, Ep. 21. 13, vol. i. 76 (Venice, 1766).

felt even in the humble round of our fleeting life : and that, therefore, we should all of us live our lives reverently, and in holy fear, as if living in the sacred antechamber of a more sacred shrine.

In saying this I must nevertheless not be taken to suggest that our ancestors conceded a final authority, even to any of the poets and philosophers. We simply deny that men have corrupted Truth divinely entrusted to them by an over-zealous devotion to literature. Indeed, the Fathers plainly and avowedly discountenance pagan writers, so far as their false opinions are concerned : but are far from denying that they contain many natural truths upon which they themselves were nourished by long experience, and thereby silently prepared for reception of higher knowledge.

But, in still later times, how great was the honour paid to Virgil, though in a simple and unlearned age, may be seen from the widespread tradition of his magical power and skill. In fact, there was no more favourite theme among the story-tellers of that age : just as in the East, even nowadays, the name of Solomon is said to be associated with similar legends. Certainly, it is consistent and natural enough, that those great men who, with a skill like that of Orpheus, could sway and bend to their will the minds even of the learned, should in the minds of the unlearned be associated with magical arts. Moreover, all such as, either in the ages which are peculiarly styled *Dark*, or subsequently, made a name in literature—at first few and far between, and after the year A.D. 1000 more numerous—were certainly, one and all, influenced through and through by Virgil. They have a deep admiration for him : delight to quote splendid passages from his writings : accord to him, without question, the very first place among heathen writers. Does not the renowned Dante, who was a ‘primary’ philosopher no less than a ‘primary’ poet, specially single out Virgil as his guide through the mysterious 806

lower regions? Does he not openly declare that his Master Virgil, among all the writers of antiquity known in his own times, best prepared the way for the seekers after truth? It cannot be supposed that it was merely the poetic power and beauty which influenced so serious a poet as Dante, in choosing Virgil's guidance on such an enterprise. The truth is, I feel sure, that Virgil's Platonic visions, and vague auguries concerning the Infernal Regions and the state of the departed, had sunk deep into the heart of that great and noble poet: nor could he in any wise restrain himself from the conclusion that Virgil was divinely sent into the world to lead all refined minds to true and sound piety.

Again, think of those later poets who, either in Italy or in our own country, have won for themselves the highest renown, after having been, by early training, thoroughly steeped in Latin literature, such as Spenser in England and Tasso in Italy: do not most of them show on almost every page that they had taken Virgil as their master? and have not these poets served as a channel through which a certain Virgilian tone and an almost religious reverence for Nature and her charms have flowed down, in large measure, to poets of our own day? So that as the great poet reclaimed his Roman countrymen from their former savage and warlike fierceness, in like manner he emancipated our writers from pedantic affectation, combining genius with sound judgement, and preventing them being led astray by a superficial appearance of excellence.

'But,' it may be objected, 'when compared with the ancients, most of these later poets prove far inferior.' That is quite true, and it is partly due to the mere fact that they are imitating, for imitation is wont to take the fire out of gifts which would otherwise be effective enough: partly also it is the result of the wide diffusion of liberal education; for in the present day there is scarcely any

one, in any class, who has not the free right of entry into the enjoyment of culture. The consequence is, that we 807 have large numbers who indulge themselves in the empty affectation of delight in the things of the country—indeed, profess whole-hearted sympathy with the poet who celebrates pastoral life, and pretend to be deeply affected when he touches upon the wonders of the world or the charms of nature and the country: though, in deed and truth, their real interests are in far other concerns. And we observe much the same state of things with regard to religion. Once let some new view obtain a little popularity, forthwith the herd of imitators throng forth, one and all repeating the popular phrases and catchwords *ad nauseam*, without any real belief and merely to be in the fashion. Now, as in religious matters such noisy applause is repellent to all pious and serious people, so we can understand with regard to Poetry how the very best kind runs a real danger, when it has become popular with the crowd and the ordinary run of mankind: and how great our indebtedness is to the man who, more than any one other poet, has, by the example and tone of his poetry, moderated this pernicious effect.

Not, however, to rest the case upon Virgil alone, let us trace the whole question up to its fundamental principles: what more conceivable than that all poetry may have been providentially bestowed on man as the first elements, the prelude, so to speak, of genuine piety? since, for one thing, ancient records as a rule bear out the conclusion that there has seldom been a revival of religion unless a high and noble order of poets has first led the way: and, for another, both in effect and in character, real Religion is in striking accord with true poetry.

First, then (and I ask it, as being concerned with holiest things, with deepest reverence and awe), does it not seem that the history of Jewish literature was providentially

808 guided, and that a long series of prophets and poets were sent to mould men's minds to be ready to receive the fuller revelation of wisdom and goodness that was to come? Certainly any one would be surprised to find how large a part Poetry plays in the Holy Scriptures. For, if I am not mistaken, nearly half the sacred volume was written in metre. Even where measure is absent we are conscious of a certain poetic tone: whether in the stories of the fortunes and deeds of the men of earliest time, especially of country-folk, living their simple lives; or in the mysteries of sacrifices, festivals, holy days, and the other details of the Mosaic law. And both these parts of the Bible have ever had a special attraction for those who are known to be most devoted to the Muses. Hence it is sufficiently clear that a kind of relationship exists between those subjects which God has ordained to prepare the way for his Gospel and the dispositions and tone of mind of those whom we honour pre-eminently as poets, or at least as disciples of the poets. And this is quite natural, for in each case there is the same characteristic: the mind is carried in its desires beyond the things of this world: its hope lays hold upon something far better, and it puts aside the thought of visible and material blessings. For the Jews always felt that their religion bound them to look forward to a better dispensation: and in the whole realm of Poetry, though poets may not be able to point to anything higher, yet there is always a certain implicit suggestion of aims and aspirations unfulfilled, as if throughout life they felt that 'works all slack and aimless lie',¹ yes, works more divine than they can grasp and comprehend. Therefore I cannot help believing that it was in more than one way that the Hebrew seers and poets prepared their nation to receive the later revelation of Truth. Over and above the direct teaching of their words, they indoctrinated

¹ *Aen.* iv. 88 (Conington).

the whole race with an undefined expectation, stimulating it to speculate about the future even by that characteristic tone of Poetry, which they ever maintain in their prophecies.

But if the study of their prophets silently moulded the 809 minds of the Jews for a reception of truth, we may well believe that the other race, whose members first joined the ranks of Christians, by no means lacked its own special schooling ; that their minds, too, were not left untrained and unprepared to welcome the pungent flavour of the heavenly doctrine. Therefore we fully endorse the reasoning of those who hold that Greek and Latin literature fulfilled nearly the same office, as far as regards those races, as did the visions of the Prophets for the Jews. 2 189 It will be remembered that we were led towards such a view when specially considering the work of Virgil. But that 470 the principle has a wider application, embracing the whole range of ancient literature, we may learn from the teaching of most of the great students and teachers of the early Church. They are wont to compare the ancient literature to the treasures and splendid ornaments of the Egyptians, which having, by divine decree, fallen as spoil into the hands of the Hebrews, supplied that indigent people with the means of worthily adorning the temple of God. Indeed, one writer, a distinguished representative both of philosophy and of theology, does not hesitate to compare, in express terms, Philosophy with the Mosaic Law, as if, in his view, each had the same office assigned to it by a benevolent providence. ' For,' says he, ' just as, in their own due time, have come to light the truths we preach to-day, so in *their* due time God's gifts were given to each nation : to the Barbarians, as the Greeks call them, the Law and the Prophets, to the Greeks, philosophy, whereby their ears were little by little prepared to receive the Gospel.' ¹ And a little further on he writes : ' The Law was given

¹ S. Clem. Alex. *Strom.* vi. 44.

to the Jews, philosophy to the Greeks until the Advent of Christ : and thereafter one general invitation was offered to all.'¹ But why spend time on proving this point ? the same father is wont, in discussing Philosophy, to adopt without scruple all those words and phrases which by
810 common assent are specially associated with religion. For he says that Philosophy stood to the ancient Greeks in stead of a *Testament*,² that by Philosophy those who died without knowledge of Christ are in some sort *justified* :³ and he even styles *Prophets*⁴ all who sought to raise men's thoughts to higher things, such as Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras : all of whom, he declares, were divinely sent for the sake of the Greeks, that they might prophesy to them in their own tongue. Moreover, he supports his view by the very weighty authority of him who spoke of Epimenides as ' a *prophet* of the Cretians ' .⁵

' But,' it is urged, ' there have been distinguished Christian writers who have anathematized secular literature, and banished Poetry as being " wine of devils " from the pure confines of the Church and who even ascribe the works of Homer and Pindar to evil spirits.'⁶ I grant this is so ; but you will also find that most of these very men have quoted many passages from heathen writers when it suited their own purpose : that they have sometimes recommended the study of them to the clergy : and that, while ascribing such works to Demons, they yet allow that the whole range of fictions of this kind has been provi-

¹ S. Clem. Alex. *Strom.* vi. 159.

² *Ibid.* vi. 67.

³ *Ibid.* i. 99.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. 59.

⁵ Titus i. 12.

⁶ See Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, II, xxii. 13. Augustine speaks of some lines of the *Eunuchus* alluding to Jupiter and Danae as ' vessels ' containing the ' wine of error '. Jerome also calls the works of poets the ' food of demons '. Elsewhere Bacon says ' one of the fathers in great severity called poesy *vinum daemonum*.'

dentially framed to foreshadow and resemble the facts of sacred truth. In short, the Fathers of the Church proscribe, it seems to me, this class of literature, much in the same spirit which long ago led the most devoted of Homer's admirers to banish all poetry from his Republic. They, like Plato, felt the immense influence which the divine art of Poetry must wield in any society : and so they strove with might and main to prevent this influence from doing harm, and to make sure that the Gentiles might not be misled, as they saw the Jews had been, and their minds distracted from truth by care for what was only a type and a shadow of it. There is, then, nothing in their teaching inconsistent with the belief that all that array of poets and poetry, upon which Greeks and Romans prided themselves, pointed forward in God's Providence to a coming order of things, even though the writers themselves were unconscious of it. 811

And, if they truly possess this quality, we may heartily approve the policy of our forefathers in assigning so great a share and influence in the education of youth to the ancient Greek and Latin poets. In this they do no more than follow in the footsteps of the Providence which, so many ages ago, saw fit to train the opening minds of God's own people in studies of the same kind : and, just as it gave to the Jews the oracles of the prophets, so to the rest of the world, though under a different dispensation, accorded Homer, Plato, and Virgil as first elements of wisdom and truth. Finally, let us be well assured of this : it vitally concerns the interests of sacred truth to maintain the usage which has survived in our Universities up to the present time, of requiring from our students a close and constant study of the writings of the classic poets, philosophers, and historians : who may all be considered poets, so far at least as they are wont to elevate the mind by the clear light either of memory or lofty speculation.

One word more : some may feel surprised that we ascribe a serious and almost religious function to a literature, in which there is so much that is degrading, so much that is trivial ; but I would ask such to remember that (if I may be pardoned for saying so) there are many things found in the Scriptures strikingly out of accord with what we weak men should have antecedently expected. Let us rest in the assurance that on such a question human anticipations are almost worthless, all being ordered by the will of Him who alone knows and directs the secret cause of all things.

But, to return to my argument : since it is clear, or at least a probable hypothesis, that in the highest of all interests, on which alone depends the final happiness of
812 the race of man, poetry was providentially destined to prepare the way for Revealed Truth itself, and to guide and shape men's minds for reception of still nobler teaching, it is consistent to see the same principle at work in what I may call less important departments of its influence. I cling to the belief that, in each several age of the world, in each several region of the earth, true and genuine Poetry has, by its silent influence, fostered sincere and grave piety. We shall not readily find an instance of any state, provided indeed it enjoy the advantage of stable law and morality, which has changed its existing religious belief for a more serious and holier creed, unless the tone of its favourite poets has first undergone a change. And assuredly, wherever religion has been weakened, there men fall back into the condition in which our ancestors were before embracing Christianity. There is no reason, then, why they should not be raised gradually to a better life by the same means and method, namely, by a new order of Poetry.

For instance (to keep to our own country), remember that renowned circle of writers who flourished among ourselves in the time of Elizabeth. Was not the tone and temper

of poets and of poetry such as, even though the writers were unconscious of it, exactly accorded with the healthier religious spirit which was destined to prevail in the reign of Charles ? To particularize—Shakespeare, the greatest of them all, the delight of all the world, especially of young England, did he effect nothing, who sometimes by jest, sometimes by bitter satire, lashed chiefly those very mischiefs which, in the age immediately following, were to work such fatal harm in our State ? who always seems to be in his best and happiest mood when some hypocrite in religion or some disloyal subject is being put to shame. And did not the youth who grew up in studious love of Spenser enter with well-prepared minds into the contest with those turbulent foes who were wont to assail royal ladies and priests of religion with insult and abuse ?

I say nothing of another fact, which nevertheless must 813 have had great influence ; on the one side we see men who estimate all things after a certain inborn sense of right and fitting ; and, on the other, those who, like all the Epicurean school, look for some visible and material gain from every action. Now the noble poems of Shakespeare and Spenser had not merely taught men to shun the multitude, but, much more important, lifted their minds to piety and religion : for each of them always tests what can be seen by reference to a standard of heavenly truth, whether he is treating of the deeds and affairs of men or the splendid charm of earth and sky : and this has always been the chief aim of the Catholic Church, though after her own mystical and lofty fashion. And so, in this respect also I should hold that splendid harvest of great poems to have led the way to a sounder religious belief.

Thus much as to the fact itself : let us now briefly consider the causes of it. For it is hard to believe that these two—Poetry and Theology—would have proved such true allies unless there was a hidden tie of kinship between

them ; nor could we possibly place a nobler crown upon our whole work, than by briefly developing the essential principle and quality which they have in common.

And here, as so often before, we must go back to the very beginning and foundation of all Poetry. Our conclusion was, that this divine art essentially consisted in a power of healing and restoring overburdened and passionate minds. It follows that the more deeply any feeling penetrates human affections, and the more permanently it influences them, the closer are its relationships and associations with Poetry. Now, partly the very nature of religion in itself, partly the actual confession of all who can be supposed to have the faintest sense of true piety, 814 impress on us the fact that nothing takes such entire possession of the human heart, and, in a way, concentrates its feeling, as the thought of God and an eternity to come : nowhere is our feeble mortal nature more conscious of its helplessness ; nothing so powerfully impels it, sadly and anxiously, to look round on all sides for remedy and relief. As a result of this, Religion freely and gladly avails itself of every comfort and assistance which Poetry may afford : such as the regularity, the modulations, the changes of rhythm ; the use of language sometimes restrained, sometimes eager and passionate ; and all those other methods which all men feel after, but only a few can express. Moreover, a true and holy religion will turn such aids to the fullest account, because it, most of all, feels itself overwhelmed in the presence of the boundless vastness of the Universe : and this is so both when in early days, before Truth itself was fully revealed, simple untrained races were being taught by some dim outlines and types, and when more advanced believers are being trained to find utterance and language worthy to express their gratitude for God's great mercies to them.

Moreover, from this common weakness there springs

a common use of this external world and of all objects which appeal to the senses. And in this regard it is marvellous how Piety and Poetry are able to help each other. For, while Religion seeks out, as I said, on all sides, not merely language but also anything which may perform the office of language and help to express the emotions of the soul ; what aid can be imagined more grateful and more timely than the presence of Poetry, which leads men to the secret sources of Nature, and supplies a rich wealth of similes whereby a pious mind may supply and remedy, in some sort, its powerlessness of speech ; and may express many things more touchingly, many things more seriously and weightily, all things more truly, than had been possible without this aid ? Conversely, should we ask how, pre-815 eminently, 'came honour and renown to prophetic bards and their poems',¹ it is Religion that has most to be thanked for this. For, once let that magic wand, as the phrase goes, touch any region of Nature, forthwith all that before seemed secular and profane is illumined with a new and celestial light : men come to realize that the various images and similes of things, and all other poetic charms, are not merely the play of a keen and clever mind, nor to be put down as empty fancies : but rather they guide us by gentle hints and no uncertain signs, to the very utterances of Nature, or we may more truly say, of the Author of Nature. And thus it has come to pass, that great and pre-eminent poets have almost been ranked as the representatives of religion, and their sphere has been treated with religious reverence. In short, Poetry lends Religion her wealth of symbols and similes : Religion restores these again to Poetry, clothed with so splendid a radiance that they appear to be no longer merely symbols, but to partake (I might almost say) of the nature of sacraments. There is, too, another strong tie of kinship which binds

¹ Hor. *A. P.* 400.

these two together, in that each is controlled by a tone of modest and religious reserve. For, on the one hand, all who carefully try to imitate Nature are forced to observe a certain restraint and reserve: at least thus far, that, like her, they approach each stage of beauty by a quiet and well-ordered movement, not suddenly or, to use a mathematical phrase, *per saltum* (as do those who have no scruple in appearing boldly in public); and, on the other hand, the whole principle of piety, such at least as is wisely governed, is ordered by the rule divinely laid down in Holy Scripture, that things of highest worth should, for the most part, not be offered to listless and unprepared minds; but only be brought into the light when the eyes of those who gaze on them have been disciplined and
816 purified. Thus the controlling Power which tempers and orders all things has compelled each, by a kind of decree, not to permit any one to have full fruition of the beautiful form and features of Truth, except his devotion be such as leads him to take zealous pains to search her out. Certainly no one who has been trained in this principle from his earliest years and into whose mind it has sunk deeply will ever allow himself to expose the sacred mysteries either of Nature or Religion to public view without regard to the temper and training of his hearers. He would rather be charged with obscureness than pour forth all truths, secret and open alike, without restraint; he would rather be criticized as wanting in ability than wanting in reserve.

Lastly, both in Poetry and in Religion, an indefinitely tender and keen feeling for what is past or out of sight or yet to come, will ever assert and claim a high place of honour for itself. For those who, from their very heart, either burst into poetry, or seek the Deity in prayer, must needs ever cherish with their whole spirit the vision of something more beautiful, greater and more lovable, than all that mortal eye can see. Thus the very practice and

cultivation of Poetry will be found to possess, in some sort, the power of guiding and composing the mind to worship and prayer : provided indeed the poems contain nothing hurtful either to religion or morality.

I think we have now shown ample reason for believing that, since the relationships between Poetry and Religion are so close and so varied, it was by no mere accident, but by divine providence, that the former has often paved and prepared the way for the latter. And it follows that whatever is wont to corrupt and undermine Religion will to a great degree correspond with that which injures and degrades poets and poetry. For men may either praise in their poems things unworthy : and this may be compared with the error of those who make gods of earthly and perishable things : or they may praise worthy things not whole-heartedly, but rather out of imitation and fashion : and this is, as you know, the most discreditable of all ⁸¹⁷ faults in matters of piety or religion. Such men are called hypocrites, the term being borrowed from the stage : and hence we may infer that as these have only the empty show of virtue, so the others have only an empty form of Poetry, and that each is very far indeed from the reality.

Now as the faults in the two are so much alike, we may well consider whether the remedy will not be much the same in each case. In each the most important precept is this : be on your guard against the belief that anything is effected by mere admiration, without effort and action on your own part. No poet will ever be great who does not constantly spend time and toil in studying the beauty of earth and sky so as to make every detail of the whole bear upon the object of his own love and enthusiasm : nor will any one make the slightest progress in holiness and piety who is content with the empty praises of good books or good men and makes no attempt to imitate them in his own life. In the second place, when a man has

once chosen the field of work for which his true bent best fits him, let him keep bravely and persistently to it : let him not, by restlessly flitting from subject to subject, waste his powers and fail of all result : and, most important of all, let him not stain good with evil, pure with impure. These are the mottoes for those who aim either at being wise men in life or at winning renown in literature as poets. To both alike will apply the saying, ' Put your whole heart into what you are doing ' : let it be something simple and clearly defined, something for which eye and mind will be on the watch at all times.

But on so well known a theme I am afraid that I may easily weary you by saying too much, and, indeed, I am under some apprehension that the same criticism may be made upon the greater part of these lectures. And so, at length to place some sort of crown upon the whole work, and at the same time not to end without a word of happy augury and a kindly hope—that would indeed be very unfitting in one whom, unworthy as he is, you have so highly honoured and with whose imperfect performance you have borne so indulgently—this one thing I desire to impress upon, and commend to all my younger hearers.

818 Only then will Poetry be fitly followed and studied, when those who love it remember that it is a gift to mankind, given that, like a high-born handmaid, it may wait upon and minister to true Religion ; and therefore it is to be honoured, not with lip-service, but really and truly, with all modesty, constancy, and purity. On this wholly depends the hope we venture to cherish to-day, that, in years to come, that deeper loftier note of Poetry which has for so many years been sounded in our ears may have good fruit and issue to the happy increase of those studies which are peculiarly termed Divine. May God grant, if this may perchance be His own will, that it be not hindered, even in the smallest degree, by fault or failure on the part of any one of us !

The 'Persae' of Aeschylus

AFTER I had sent to press the lecture (xvii) in which I discussed the theory that Aeschylus intentionally held up the fortunes of the Persians to ridicule in the *Persae*, a learned friend of mine, whose name would be received with great respect if I were allowed to mention it, wrote to me that he felt considerable doubt as to my conclusion. As I was much impressed by his arguments, I asked him if he would allow his letter on the subject to be printed, and he has kindly given permission. Accordingly I give here his own words, most worthy as they are to be carefully weighed by every reader who wishes to form a just estimate of the spirit and tone, not only of Aeschylus and his Athenian countrymen, but of all writers and of all nations who have at any time won so striking a success. As for the point at issue between us, I do not attempt to decide it, as I should not wish to seem at all unkindly in my judgement either to that illustrious poet or to the famous Persian people—a people which seems to me to have been dearer to the Most High than any other save his own chosen Jewish race.

‘I do not feel that I have any right to venture to oppose with any great confidence a view of yours about the *Persae* of Aeschylus. Yet I cannot help suspecting that you have been somewhat too severe in your criticism of those scholars who hold that there is a comic vein running through the whole of the play. No sane man, I suppose, will believe for a moment that a work so correct, so splendid, and so highly finished, was treated as an opportunity for empty jeers and insults, and similar banalities. But why may not Aeschylus, exulting with manly pride and congratulating his countrymen just after a triumphant struggle, have written this play as a kind of solemn paean (*Persae*, 393)? If that were his design, it would, in my judgement, be quite in harmony with it that the poet should have intended to represent dramatically and to ridicule all excitable moods and vainglorious bragging of the barbarians, their countless hordes of soldiers, their luxurious dissipation and wealth, while, nevertheless, holding it fitting and right to treat Atossa and Darius, and any other Asiatic who

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really showed courage, with all honour as generous victors are wont to do. I suspect that the "triumphs" of the Roman generals were ordered in much the same spirit: they made their captive kings and subject peoples pass under the yoke, yet they took care not to tarnish the glory of their own exploits by too great humiliation of their foes.

You have referred to certain passages in the *Persae*, which the critics in question have quoted, and, as you urge, without sufficient reason, in support of their view: with regard to these, I imagine that those who agree with me would be able to find arguments that they could urge in reply. But I do not pause to consider them, since there are, besides, many details scattered throughout the whole play, on which I prefer to base my reasoning. Why is it, do you think, that even in the most high-flown language of the Persian elders Aeschylus has introduced so frequently allusions which annoy us by the suggestions of effeminacy, and which even at times imply scorn and contempt? Such as these:

And there follow crowds of Lydians,
Very delicate and stately.¹

Babylon too, gold abounding,
Sends a mingled cloud, swept onward.²

What man is of power, what army of strength or size
To stem that torrent, or bar the invincible wave?³

Who does not here detect Athenian sentiment and feeling speaking through Persian tongues? This is not the language of venerable elders following their absent armies, with favourable auguries and hopes for their success, but, obviously, the poet is holding up to ridicule that vast rabble of barbarians in conflict against whom one single state of brave men had maintained the rights and liberty of Greece. When, however, we come to the Messenger's account of the battle and its issue, no one is so untrained as not to feel at once that everything—language, sentiment, tone, feeling—is thoroughly Athenian. The account is almost like the "Parabasis" in a comedy:

And when day, bright to look on with white steeds,
O'erspread the earth, then rose from the Hellenes
Loud chant of cry of battle, and forthwith
Echo gave answer from each island rock;
And terror then on all the Persians fell,
Of fond hopes disappointed. Not in flight
The Hellenes then their solemn paeans sang:
But with brave spirit hasting on to battle. &c.⁴

¹ *Pers.* 41 (Plumptre).

² *Pers.* 52 (Plumptre).

³ *Pers.* 87 (Campbell).

⁴ *Pers.* 386–94 (Plumptre).

'Then, too, those numerous passages in this tragedy in which 821 the poet, contrary to his wont, plays upon the endings of words and sounds, seem to me very pertinent to a right solution of this question. Such as these, for instance :

'Twas Xerxes led them forth, woe ! woe !
'Twas Xerxes lost them all, woe ! woe !
'Twas Xerxes who with evil counsels sped
Their course in sea-borne barques.¹

Every one will here be reminded of the satirical passage in Aristophanes, where the comic dramatist composes a solemn dirge over a poultry-cock in the form of a burlesque on the dirges in Euripides :

Now tears alone are left me,
My neighbour hath bereft me,
Of all—of all—of all—all but a tear !
Since he, my faithful trusty chanticleer,
Is flown—is flown !—is gone—is gone.²

There are, besides, many other touches in respect of choice and setting of phrase, well calculated to move the derisive contempt of free men, or, at any rate, characteristic of a barbaric and servile character. You have quoted in your favour, and rightly quoted, the passage in which the ghost of Darius is evoked by the Chorus. But it is questionable whether even here, the guardians of the Persian kingdom, Xerxes' vicegerents, are not, designedly, made so to speak that their very language makes them ridiculous to the Athenians :

Doth he, the blest one, hear,
The king, like Gods in power,
Hear me, as I send forth
My cries in barbarous speech ?³

Beautiful and full of all respect are the lines which immediately follow, yet what must have been the feelings moving the citizens of the freest state in Greece, when the venerable Chorus speaks in this style of the truly " Persian pomp " of the dead king ?

Monarch, O ancient monarch, come, oh, come,
Come to the summit of sepulchral mound,
Lifting thy foot encased
In slipper saffron-dyed,
And giving to our view
Thy royal tiara's crest.⁴

Does not a comparison of the effeminate manners of those under

¹ *Pers.* 550 (Plumptre).

² *Frogs*, 1352 (Frere).

³ *Pers.* 633 (Plumptre).

⁴ *Pers.* 658 (Plumptre).

absolute rule with the manly character fostered by independence at once force itself on our mind ?

'Finally, there remains one argument which I cannot allow myself to pass over. In questions of this kind scarcely anything is more important than a nice appreciation of the metre and verse. Well, it is very noticeable that all through the *Persae*, the Chorus generally employs Anapaests : which agree, beyond all others, with the tone and temper of triumphal poetry : for the very lines seem to share the sense of triumph and to let the full heart express itself in joyous forms. On the other

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hand, when Atossa, Darius, and Xerxes are on the stage, the dialogue is for the most part in trochaic verse. Now the main and almost peculiar force of trochees is seen in jest and comedy, or in short and quick dialogue about trivial things. One may well be struck, therefore, with the fact that, in the *Persae*, the chief characters, while treating of most important and grievous events, use trochaic measure : unless, indeed, we conclude (as I do for my part) that the poet with his consummate art and skill, meant to temper all tragic and sorrowful emotion on the part of the audience by using a measure little according with grief; he has aimed at keeping one and the same note throughout the whole poem, unbroken by interruption or change or through too strong an appeal to pity.'

*Persae is the
best tragedy
have, now
original
in of the
uma was
classic acc.*

to Aristotle; Poetics ch. IV. § 14

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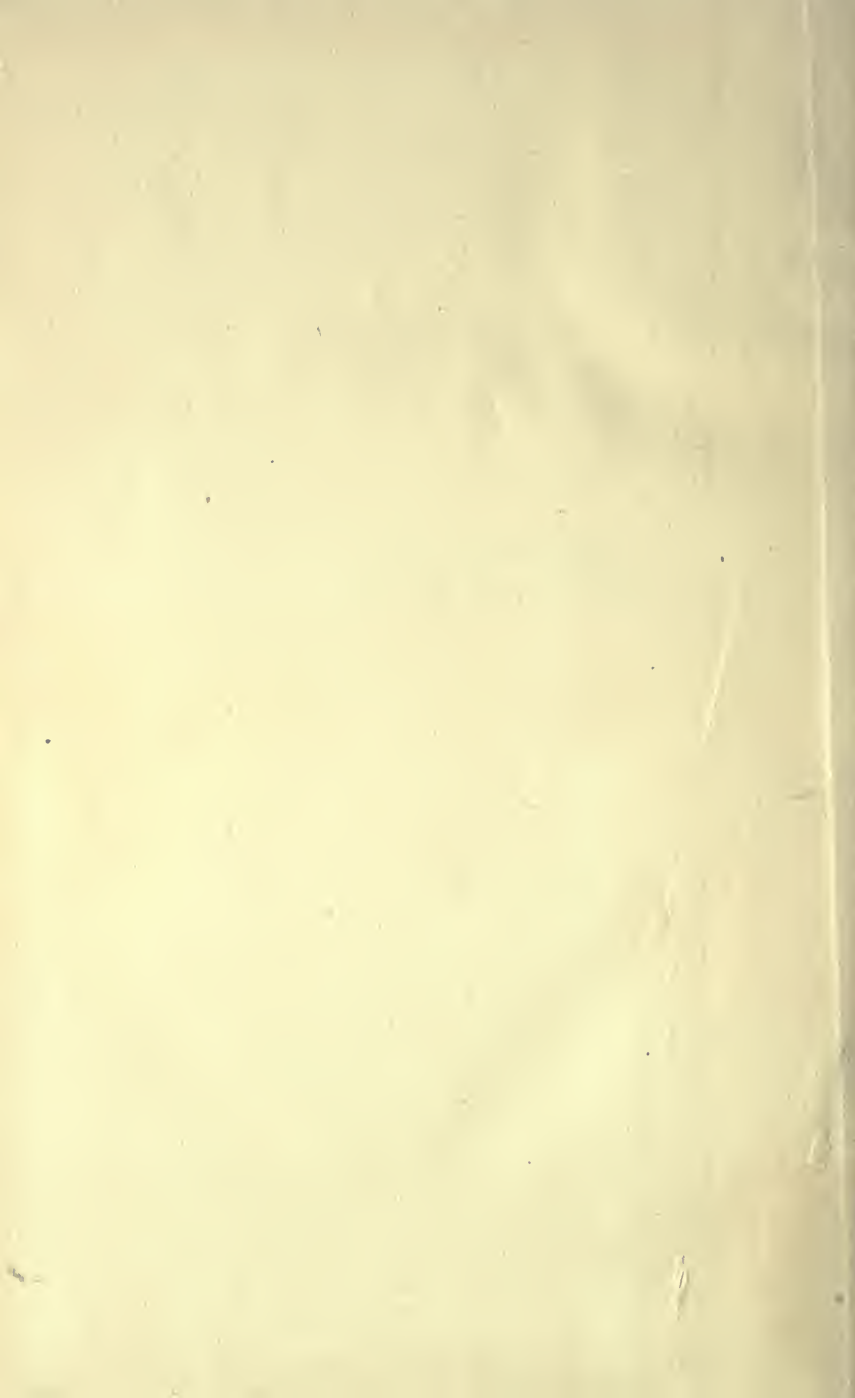
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